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## REMEMBERING SION





# REMEMBERING SION

*A Chronicle of Storm and Quiet*

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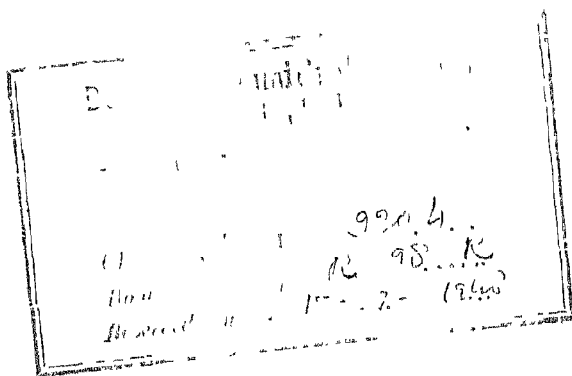
by  
DESMOND  
RYAN

*"Of Ireland, the Dalcassians, of hopes,  
conspiracies, of Arthur Griffith now. . . . In  
gay Páree he hides, Egan of Paris, unsought  
by any save by me . . . Weak wasting hand  
on mine. They have forgotten Kevin Egan,  
not he them. Remembering thee, O Sion."*

JAMES JOYCE, *Ulysses*.

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TO SALLY





A CROSS the seas in the spring of 1906 from the lights and accents of London, nearly thirteen years old, past the Queen of Cities, Dublin, to the lonely emerald spaces of County Meath, within six miles of Tara of the Kings, then it was that I first caught a glimpse of Liffeside in passing. She was an El Dorado beckoning with the fabled Boyne in a fairy mist beyond her and those grazing spaces towards which we were bound, a far-off capital of dreams and heroes, a rare city my fancy had often mirrored as I watched the stars over a hawthorn-fringed hill sweeping down to Dulwich, where a blind man sat by day and horse-buses braked heavily and hansoms with reins tightened and bells jingling spun slowly downward at night-time. With every throb of the great ship even as Holyhead became black and void in the winds and waves behind, the far-off dream grew nearer, the dream sharpened as in some magician's crystal in the London shop-fronts, spelled out from books with old Celtic scroll designs and tales of Fionn and the Children of Lir, embellished by my uncle, Thomas Boyd, who knew Shakespeare by heart and read Gothic typed books in his study as he waited for Padraic O'Conaire, his friend, to come in with more wild tales. These two had sought romance, I gathered, sleeping beneath the moon in Epping Forest and talking of the caravan in which they proposed to travel Ireland, and writing poems of Cuchulainn and Deirdre and grim tales of the West while they planned the departure of

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the caravan, fated never to start. Then in her memory and accent which she had kept unspoiled for more than seventy years, my grandmother had told me of the Liffeside and far Donegal and wave-washed Balbriggan. So deepened the vision of the Fairy City as the train rushed through the towns of England and Wales to that Holyhead already lost behind. Onward now across the sea to Dublin at dawn behind Howth and Dunleary in the noble half-circle of the Bay. For all the fever and freedom of foreign cities in our blood we Irish who dwell afar never forget that first sight of Ireland in the faint morning light with the Kish and Bailey flashing, the swoop of gulls, the lash of waters, stony quay and smoke ascending. Never can we have a greater moment but once again: when willy-nilly we turn back with the lighthouses flashing behind us bound fondly hoping for peace and freedom in all cities of the earth but one: the Dublin we dream of, a torch on the waters, a voice in every continent and on every ocean, an imperishable gem of many facets, some tarnished and dull, some a-flame and a-glitter, some with all the quiet of starlight, capital of war and prayer and vision and vivid speech, dawns above old squares peaceful as a vanished century, green domes of bronze saluting across her quay-hemmed river, city of talkers from dawn to dusk, a glittering chronicle of malice, piety and wit humming under all her roofs from Howth to Killiney, from Drumcondra to Rathfarnham, from North Wall to Kingsbridge. Her enemies say she is a backwater of failure, gossip and the day before yesterday, with a revolution and a Horse Show now and then, but what matter the enemies of Dublin? Much Dublin cares or ever cared, and this is both the greatest virtue and vice of Dublin.

Spray and waves over the steamer's side and a rush

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of many passengers below. I linger alone looking over the railings at the waves beating time with the howling engines. On across the seas never yet sailed before except on a heeling paddle-boat down the Thames, remembering my grandfather had been a sailor and thinking this gave me immunity from all the tricks and jolts of Neptune, excited at this voyage to green fields and dreams and an ageless battle in which the Irish had always lost and fought again and lost and wandered to Spain and France and America thereafter, to a magic land built up of the sad tales my grandfather had told me of the corpses he had seen on the roadside as he went to school as a boy, giving his lunch to the starving people and escaping the famine fever which killed his own father, of the romantic tales I had read in Joyce's *Old Celtic Romances*, and the wilder tales Padraic O'Conaire had scattered when he came in to see my uncle and all the swarms of legendary invaders in the beginnings of the world, half-god, half-human, the deeds of Fionn and Cuchulainn and princes floating away in crystal boats to the Land of Eternal Youth, and the Children of Lir waiting in the guise of swans for the coming of Patrick to that Meath I should see within another day, and the Bay, too, where Danish invaders foundered at last in fire and defeat after Brian's victory and the steel-clad Normans blessed by an English Pope, the flames and waste of the Cromwellian and Elizabethan conquests down past William and James wrestling on the banks of that Boyne where I should live next week through the times of the United Irishmen with Grattan and Tone to the bloodless victory of O'Connell and the bloodless overthrow of the Famine to the rise and fall of Parnell, all that endless ebb and flow of the Irish tale I had read in the history books.

A wave fell upon the decks a yard away and there



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were distant lights on the waters and a cold wind swept round the ship. I walked round and round with no desire to go below and none other but to wait for the lights of Dublin in the early morning. Neptune was kind and I had never been on a ship before. Why sleep when two voices again spoke their tales in my ear? There was my uncle with the two furrows in his brow which he said had been carved by deep thought ever since he had read Euclid for pleasure at the age of nine, a feat that increased my admiration for him, as I knew I should never read Euclid for pleasure if I lived until I was nine hundred, my uncle in his study in London still reciting Shakespeare and reading his German poets and philosophers and writing a poem to his friend Batt Scanlan the fiddler over in San Francisco, or perhaps again denouncing that Bishop Butler as a driveller for saying that probability was the guide of life or the reverse, I know not which, but this answer to my question as to who the Bishop was when I had lifted a book from his table written by that divine had so completely impressed me with his worthlessness that until this hour I despise and abhor him, taking my uncle's word on the rights and wrongs of the case. I thought of my uncle and the whirling speeches he would make when roused, and the poems he wrote and the fierce words he used if interrupted, and the fire with which he recited his poems when Arthur Griffith published them in the *United Irishman*, and what a magnificent booklet that yellow-covered booklet *The Resurrection of Hungary* was that Arthur Griffith had written to start off his new Sinn Fein policy, and how I had enjoyed his sarcasms about Hungarian village ruffians and agitators who refused to allow the Austrians to steal their lands and freedom from them and the Hungarians singing, what was it:

*The Magyar who forgets his land to grasp the blood-*

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*stained Austrian hand. . . . Dear Christ Our Lord who loves us well . . . shall send his pagan soul to Hell. . . .* As bad tongues as my uncle when roused, those Hungarians. . . . Perhaps I should meet Arthur Griffith in Dublin some day and tell him how much I agreed with his book and his sarcasms and the new parable he was telling Ireland. . . . From a sight of the deep black title of the *United Irishman* and a memory of its notes and articles and a memory of my uncle handing me a copy of it with his poem of the man whose coffin had been stolen by fairies, another memory of my uncle and his bad tongue came to me over the waves. A boy at school had taunted me to boredom with the ancient tale of how the Irish always kept pigs in their parlours, and my uncle had smiled grimly when I mentioned this, ordering me forthwith to cap the ancient legend with this question: "Where is England?" Most aggressively to ask this question, and to answer peeling off my coat for battle: "England, parrot and moon-calf, is within a perch's breadth of Hell's door where they can smell the breath of all the other devils!" But the boy was so shocked that he drew away from me, thinking I was mad. From my uncle my thoughts passed to history again, for there was an aged but exuberant Irishman whose lectures on history to patriotic clubs my uncle delighted to attend, gladly listening to the booming artillery of his friend's voice ever louder and louder with face more and more crimson with wrath as the historian stayed for half an hour in the breach with Sarsfield at Limerick, and chased King William's troops back from the beleaguered city with clenched fists and showers of thunderous adjectives. Not only in Limerick of past times were this historian's battles fought. To my uncle's delight, Old Mac had pursued an English convert to Catholicism, or rather in the final stages of

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instruction to conversion, past a horrified cordon of monks down three London streets for daring to sing a song about Pat and pigs and whisky at the local bazaar, and the terrified offender, so my uncle said, never stopped running and never returned to be baptized by the monks.

The pallid face and half-smile and opaque eyes of Padraic O'Conaire rose from the waves as the boat groaned and heaved. . . . Strolling in with his black hat on the back of his head to brighten the room with rambling picturesque tales of slums he had visited and quaint pets he kept to the horror of Civil Service chiefs and London landladies: snakes and monkeys. . . . A bleak wind from the West came suddenly from his mouth and phrases limning hunger and despair. . . . Connemara of the bogs and lakes. . . . Or some desolate lodging-house where he had met outcasts and the man who went out in rags in the morning without a penny in his pockets, returning with dress-suits and opera-hats or another of those little gold ornaments the sky rained on his poverty whenever he went abroad. . . . Wonderful, said Padraic with his half-smile, how that man always found those little gold ornaments . . . and purse and watches and wallets.

Padraic O'Conaire's half-smile deepened as he warmed to his stories, wilder and wilder in their fantasy and grimness, Irish rolling from his lips, the Irish of Connemara. . . . He and my uncle often talked away in Irish as they had talked in the London tram one day, the conductor protesting: "Better language, gentlemen!" Always a fund of stories from Padraic O'Conaire. My uncle told us that he was a genius and had a whole box of stories in his room at home, but cared nothing for them and would never publish them for he had written them all in English until the Gaelic League

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ideal had gripped him and he turned back to his first language and taken a vow never to write in English again, and if people wanted to read his stories let them learn his good Connacht Irish or else go their ways in peace and ignorance. . . . Padraic told me many of the stories I read later in his books: the little ass, the nine Arabs who sought him, the snake he kept until he had to bury the creature by dropping it over a London bridge, neatly parcelled. Then a policeman rushed up and Padraic said: "What was in that parcel? A snake, constable! The poor little snake was my only friend in the world and slept with me quiet and peaceful until one night the poor little snake escaped, and coiled itself round the landlady's neck and had its brains dashed out by her angry husband, and where else could I drop it but in the Thames? Would you have me leave its remains among such heartless people, my poor little snake? And here's the address, constable, if you have any doubts." . . . A shadow of the misery of the West stood out behind his jests. . . . Ireland was not all fairyland . . . rocks and hunger and journeys across the seas. . . .

Padraic O'Conaire sat back at the fireside, the smoke of a cigarette curling over his slow smile, and he laid the box with golden guineas on its face and sides back on the table, brown mingling with blue haze floating in rings towards the low white ceiling, and twilight falling through the barred window of the lower room. My uncle's grey-blue eyes lighted and he talked to my mother and Padraic, leaping from his arm-chair with Old Mac in the breach at Limerick, Old Mac with his questioning eyes and face like a full moon in a fog, haunted by Kathleen Ni Houlihan, and taught the *Snowy-Breasted Pearl* which suited his voice by my uncle in reparation for a slight misunderstanding. Old

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Mac had tapped him on the shoulder suddenly in the classroom and received a glare and an invitation to betake himself to Hell, "but I never minded him for I knew he was thinking out a poem, and five minutes later he came across to me and said: 'Was I ever so rude to you now, Mac? I must teach you the *Snowy-Breasted Pearl!*'" . . . My uncle talks of Donegal and MacSwine's Gun roaring with spray through a hole in the cliffs and the dim headlands yonder with Knockfola and Fanad showing and Errigal rising from a sea of loneliness and heather . . . fine rebel reading he had brought home to my grandfather under the shade of the Union Jack from Belfast. . . . Yesterday a policeman had clapped him on the back near Ludgate Circus, a Kerry man, and once a mighty hurler with the London teams: "Good day, Mr. Boyd! Don't be alarmed, it takes me to keep these bloody Saxons in order!" . . . Leaping from his chair, forehead knitted and eloquent: "Yes, we need a revolution in Ireland, revolution of mind and thought!" . . . Padraic and my mother quizzing him, but he grows more eloquent about his revolution. . . . Lionel Johnson and all the other poets falling together under the table: *A terrible and splendid trust heartens the host of Innisfail. . . . Their dream is of the swift sword-thrust. . . . A lightning glory of the Gael. . . . A dream, a dream, an ancient dream. . . . Yet ere peace come to Innisfail. . . . Some weapons on some field must gleam. . . . Some burning glory fire the Gael. . . .*

Just as good himself, had he not written:

*Thou art mighty, O Banba!  
More rich in thyself alone,  
Than that harlot upon a throne  
Whose lure is on every flood  
And whose robes are the price of blood. . . .*

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*And we love thee, O Banba,  
Though the spoiler be in thy hall,  
And thou art bereft of all,  
Save only that Spirit for friend  
Who shapes all things in the end. . . .*

A long time about it, anyway! From a shelf on the glass overmantel a bearded bard-like face gleamed out of a portrait: John O'Leary, last of the Fenians. Not quite the last. The old Fenian away in Wimbledon had walked back with that photograph over the hawthorn-lined hill in the early morn, like John O'Leary himself with long pointed beard and piercing eyes . . . bested the Castle in the Land League time . . . never forgave Parnell . . . nor the English. . . . A long table in the room overhead where my father holds an Irish class and the old man from Wimbledon wrestles with Æsop in Gaelic and waxes fierce as he discovers one more word the English stole from the Irish and won't admit that the Irish ever had occasion to borrow any words themselves from Saxon or Latin. Plain as a pike-staff: frog and table and lamp and box, and word after word the scoundrels stole from us! Pity they never stopped at words! A pirated language and a pirate Empire!

A gleam of light on the gold on the cap as an officer goes by, and I am away from the ship again to noisy streets and horses trotting before tram-cars in the early morn. . . . With his smoking-cap on his head and his telescope beneath his arm, my grandfather mounts four flights in 306 Camberwell New Road, no one else stirring. He looks over the traffic towards the Green and finds it is five. He goes below to regulate all the clocks. Six silver medals in his desk for the Crimean War and his days in the navy and guarding the coasts of Ireland, his golden-tasselled sword with Damascus

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blade hanging in his wardrobe but his sword-stick ready for the burglars near the great wooden bed. . . . Reads under the white globe downstairs until my uncle returns in the early hours from listening to Batt Scanlan's tunes. . . . Walked ten miles for a doctor the night his father died in the Famine Year and rested in a wayside house where he found a mother and her three children lying dead. . . . Corpses on the roadside. . . . Read John Mitchel's *United Irishman* in the forge every week in his boyhood in the South to his friend the blacksmith and always loved Mitchel though he would have strung up that old blackguard, Gladstone, any day of the week and told tales of O'Connell when he forgot his grandchildren were listening that made my grandmother cry: "Tut-tut, Tom, that's a Protestant invention. You never would have thought of it yourself!" "It's no lie, Kate. He had a representative in every barony in Ireland." Whereupon she attacked the family tree of the Boyds, insinuating that they originally came from Scotland (in spite of all his stout assertions that they were a South of Ireland family since Adam), and had he not told his Scotch curmudgeon friend round the corner that the Scotch contented themselves with leaping over a broom-stick with clasped hands, and who were the Scotch Boyds to spread tales about Daniel O'Connell anyway? Then my grandfather, remembering his grandchildren must not be scandalised, changed his method of attack by various emphatic historical digressions, including the wickedness of Mary Queen of Scots in murdering her husband with a gunpowder barrel. This saved the family tree of the Boyds from further attention but never left my grandfather the last word as my grandmother had a small tartan-bound *Life of Mary Queen of Scots* which she knew by heart as well as the certain grounds on which Queen Elizabeth had left herself open

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to criticism. So my grandfather was squelched with a final: "Collywest!"

Then he went back to his books under the white globe, sometimes talking to my father and uncle and Padraic O'Conaire in the Irish he had learned from an old Munster woman during the long months he lay with a broken arm in the Southern district where there was no English spoken for miles around. He had no very high opinion of the Irish to be found in the little pale-green books of Father O'Growney and the new speech of the Gaelic Leaguers. Only to Padraic O'Conaire would he bow as a true Irish speaker, and roll out the old prayers and proverbs his old nurse had taught him. Protestant and all as he was until his death-bed, he had no bigotry in religious matters although he was a good Tory. On Saint Patrick's Day he would set out to listen in whatever rare Catholic church in London had a sermon in Irish, and criticise or praise the idioms and manner of the preacher on his return, smoking-cap askew and his long white beard waving. . . .

A hill winding up past the Fox on the inn, red-russet, couched and perky. . . . Brother Brendan cons his Irish texts under the mulberry trees and shows me a long row of the strange Gaelic-lettered books in his room. . . . Music of Gaelic rolling from him. . . . Back in Ireland now in the Brothers' great house in Waterford. . . . Eugene and me under the trees fighting two hefty Cockneys for Ireland and getting the worst of it but rising again. . . . Brother George rasping out the weekly good conduct marks in his French accent, seeking with glittering black eyes whom he may devour in his little hall of judgment with the mottled-faced Superior watching his famous executions, Brother George gloating over his adder-toothed cane dusting his daily tribute of squirming backsides. . . . Eugene and me safe from his clutches



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in Brother Oswald's venerable and gentle care. . . . Brother Oswald in his skull-cap, proud of his scroll-work penmanship which won him gold medals at the exhibitions . . . a gentle disciplinarian. Sometimes he rises wrathful and leads with stern look a pupil out on to the stairs. . . . Tremendous tumult without. . . . Brother Oswald re-enters with the victim and says with dignity: "Let that be a lesson to you, ut, you fellow, you!" But we all know Brother Oswald has only beaten the floor and stairs and ceiling and left the culprit untouched. . . . Green fields near the Fox on the Hill and the hill hawthorn-lined which sweeps down past the blind man to Dulwich, hunger and thirst for the green fabled hills and lands of Ireland in the dust and sun-scorched streets of London.

Nearer now with every leaping wave. Shadows in the London away back beyond the seas, dark as this all-encircling night. Dark as death and journeys into the dark. . . . First coffin I ever saw in my grandfather's house with candles burning round it and a wealth of lilies of the valley and a brass crucifix over the name-plate with my aunt Eunice underneath . . . memory of the hospital ward where she had waited for the operation which had not saved her . . . a trundling lorry passes down from the operating theatre, a child runs crying after its mother unconscious on the stretcher with anæsthetic-glazed eyes . . . theatre to which my aunt goes in her turn . . . but the surgeons cannot save her from the coffin and candles. . . . Requiem of the Canon in the church round the corner with trains roaring past and the voice which Manning had known murmuring in Latin . . . his white hands sprinkle the coffin with holy water from the uplifted brush and yellow candles gleam. . . . A grave yawning on a high hill and the Canon blesses the lowered coffin, solemn in stole and biretta.

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. . . Death comes in threes, they say. . . . Another coffin, a white veil within and my sister has gone. . . . Another grave and the sister I hardly knew has gone too.

Nearer to Ireland with every leaping wave. . . . Big Ben gleaming. . . . The Canon talking about the Fenians: a great fiasco, police warned them, and hundreds cleared for America. . . . A French Communist General, one Cluseret, to lead them . . . that came out later and justified Church's condemnation. . . . Condemned by the Church . . . all oath-bound secret societies wrong even to win back the Papal States. . . . Church says established authority must be upheld. . . . Overthrown, then Church blesses new order. . . . Rude to tell him, but that's the tip: overthrow and tell the Church after. . . . Only sermons that ever held me. . . . Master of words at the Midnight Mass. . . . A saint some say.

Isle of Saints lurking beyond those flying cloud-banks. The many-voiced ship speeds over illimitable green in the half-dark. . . . He dreams of Ireland too. . . . A soldier's son. . . . Canon William Murnane has not seen Tipperary this many a long year. . . . Others who had told me of the approaching El Dorado: my mother with old stories of Balbriggan and snowy Errigal in Donegal, reading out A. M. Sullivan's *Story of Ireland* and Joyce's *Old Celtic Romances*.

Overhead black clouds wound from the funnels and kissed the waters and faded out to faint and passing sails. . . . Nearer to Dublin and my father beside the Boyne. . . . Tales of the Land War and the nights his people had been evicted into the snow beside a tumbled house. . . . Brown peat-bogs of Ireland. . . . Once he brought us back a black sod from Tipperary, hard and sweet-scented and none of the brown stuff sold four a penny in London town. . . . Row after row of books in Gaelic

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type I had seen in his study next the arm-chair whose shadow I had once taken to be God before I could spell.

Shaping hills and lighthouses turning and blinking in the dawn with the low cries of birds and the noble coast, and then in the half-light I saw the Bay and Dublin beyond.



BUT though I saw Dublin I was not to know her yet for two years more, beyond a passing glimpse of tree and tram-sets as the jaunting-car rushed us across the city to the Broadstone Station to the train which bore us to Navan in the County Meath where my father was editing the *Irish Peasant*, a paper the story of which he has told in his novel, *The Plough and the Cross*, and his book, *The Pope's Green Island*. Perhaps it was because we had not lingered in Dublin that some melancholy is associated with this first glimpse of Navan, for to me Navan had to be my first real look at the Ireland I had weaved into such a pattern of history and memory on the boat. It rained. And rained. And rained. The car even with Leonard smiling a welcome and asking for news of all his folk in London turned into no ship riding a magic sea. Leonard was the manager of the paper, and his smile in days to come could light the darkest valley, and his wit was as catching as his laughter, but this day the dull skies and the drizzling showers soon damped him. The car drove across what seemed some bleak and very empty space to the centre of the town. Opposite the office of the *Irish Peasant* some lonely and desolate men were seated on the steps of a bank, staring listlessly. Later local legend crowned them with mirth and fancy. One I know now was the Knacker Begg, crimson and frowsy, sucking his clay pipe and cadging for pints but not devoid of pride and spirit withal, for when one of the local clergy, a proud and aloof man, had knocked him off the wall of the Canal below the hill headforemost into

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a field of nettles, for some insolent remark in beer, the Knacker Begg more crimson-faced than ever had risen from the dust with the proud oath: "I didn't know you, Father, but by the Father, Son and Holy Ghost I have forgotten more than you ever learned!" . . . The lonely men stared through the rain, the Sons of Rest seated at the portals of Wealth.

It was no omen of the next two years spent in Meath, royal in pastures and memory, of journeys on the Meath roads on a bicycle with a sight of all the wonders of the Boyne and the quick and eager talk of the visitors who passed through the *Irish Peasant* office, a whole world of men on bicycles gripped by the Irish-Ireland ideal, of pipers, kilts and rolling orations in Irish and arguments and tales droll and wonderful and arguments again, and songs in the long room above the front office which looked out through sun and rain on the Sons of Rest on the bank steps, the cattle and groups on a fair day, and the magic and fateful river wood-fringed and a fair vista on its every mile just round the corner. Sometimes Leonard and I rode many miles and saw a great crowd of story-tellers and pipers and eager men with banners and drums marching through a field, and the melody of Irish on some musical lip which had formed from the cradle clear and sweet tales and songs from an Ireland, hunger-hemmed and wave-lapped on the western sea-board now:

*Abandoned, forsaken;  
To grief and to care  
Will the sea ever waken  
Relief from despair? . . .*

*And my love came behind me—  
He came from the South;  
His breast to my bosom,  
His mouth to my mouth.*

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In the long room above the Square the words gleamed out of the yellow book lifted from the table, quaint English prose around this sudden beauty and the wonder-locked Gaelic lettering on the parallel page: *The Love-Songs of Connacht*, by Dr. Douglas Hyde. . . . His photo yonder on the wall: a great dark bird. . . . In the Square a glow of colour and beribboned drones moving on to light and reconquer the bullock-held acres of Meath. . . . A motor-bike flashing past the rose-bowered barracks to the field and the music and the dancers on the platforms: Sean with the gimlet eyes has won again! . . . A dark man with a sour voice in the room above the Square argues about the clergy with Seamus, who has ridden in all the way from the Midlands to join the *Irish Peasant* staff. . . . The dark man is for the clergy and Seamus is critical. . . . There has been trouble in Portarlifton about Gaelic League classes. . . . The clergy have objected to mixed classes and trodden on the corns of an Ulsterman. . . . There have been scenes in the church and arguments in the *Irish Peasant*, and the curate in Portarlifton has been talking about Kerry potwallopers among the Portarlifton Gaelic Leaguers, but the Ulsterman knows his catechism as well as he knows the Irish of the Donegal glens. . . . The dark man grows sourer and sourer and takes away twenty characters to every half-dozen words. . . . He knocks all the Irish-Ireland idols off their pedestals . . . they wear English manufacture . . . they all speak bad Irish . . . the only Irish is Kerry Irish. . . . There is an English idiom in this book. . . . Every critic of the clergy keeps or wants to keep a harem on the quiet. . . . The clergy know that and that's why that young man up in Dublin who used to criticise them had to leave for America. . . . They told his employer more than was good for the young fellow. . . . There is another

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English idiom in that book. . . . Pearse, the Editor of the official Gaelic League organ, writes bad Irish too . . . mad on Connacht Irish. . . . Kerry the only place for Irish. . . . Reminds me of my grandfather and what the old woman in the South told him: "A Munsterman would sow and dig and cook and peel and eat a field of potatoes while a Connachtman would still be saying, *prátaí*." . . . Seamus bombards the man from Kerry, but the man from Kerry has no use for Sinn Féin and says Griffith couldn't learn Irish to save his life. . . . My father restores the peace and the man from Kerry unbends and speaks cheerfully for the rest of the night and tells amusing tales of Kerry and sings a song in Kerry Irish with a quizzical look at Seamus, asking him if he understood it and to remember to say his prayers and leave the clergy to mind their own business for they have been longer at the business than all the lay Popes who are sprouting like mushrooms. . . . Seamus drinks his health. . . .

A wind from the West, a kinder wind than that which blows from Padraic O'Conaire's mouth: Michael Breathnach tells us of Connemara and old folk-tales and the snowy mountains he will see in Switzerland when he goes back to fight his losing battle with consumption. . . . He'd say *prátaí* quicker than any Kerryman!

The rasping voice of the man from Kerry has an echo daily from the lips of Meath. . . . A jeering question about these mad Irish-Irelanders frames itself in bovine eyes. The question led me to ask another. In the County Meath that I found beyond the lights of Dublin I found there was something else besides the ruins behind the river banks and an enormous lump besides the tiny leaven of Sinn Féin: the farmer was much given to praising his lands, the huntsman his hounds, and others enjoyed their little *cruiscín lán*. A thin, dark

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and ugly tread had to be woven into my dream-pattern. There is a story of Brinsley MacNamara's in which the returned ex-soldiers after the Great War look at each other in an Irish country town day after day with the doleful heart-cry: "This is a bloody awful place!" The author had to fly from his infuriated fellow-Midlanders for similar cameos of Midland life, but in this phrase he fixed for all time the atmosphere of many a little town in Ireland which drink and gossip and scandal and mire and political windbags and rain and the provincialism of a half-anglicised, slavish and hopeless mind had turned into pestilentially bloody awful places.

Not that the town of Navan had a very dark tread in my pattern when all was said, certainly not so dark a one as another I knew which went up in smoke and tragedy in days to come, red murder and screaming Black and Tans coming like Attilas to round off its inner chronicle of gaming and drink and darker depths, closing its whisky and port-soaked life-in-death and sending it limping into history like James after the Boyne "with one shoe Irish and one shoe English, neither fighting nor making peace." The worst of Navan was the rain and the surplus of cattle over humans, but Navan for all that stands near the Boyne within six easy miles or so of Tara. The old people of Navan would stir to life at the mention of Parnell, and were as hospitable as the rest through all the little towns of Meath. Along the roads I found Round Towers and Celtic crosses and tumbled castles and ruined abbeys with romantic legends of underground passages through which the monks had walked for miles underground long ago, and magic caves by the Boyne, and a Stone of Destiny on Tara itself. . . . In after years I was to hear Patrick Pearse speak on a Meath hill of the greatest of the Meath dreamers, Father Eugene O'Growney, who dreamed first among the sleepy



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green of Meath of the restoration of the Irish language, whose pale-green books were passing from hand to hand through the little towns of Ireland, a light in the darkness.

Then there were the wonders of the printing office with its whirring machines and the type to be read backwards and clicking linotypes and ink-drums, and John the foreman printer with his merry tales of the angry reporters who came down to ask him for the loan of some erring printer for half an hour so that misprints could be written with avenging fist on the bungler's face or until he was taught not to wink at the wrong girl when the tender-hearted reporters were away taking down the long speeches of the Guardians *verbatim ad nauseam*. . . . Or Seamus and Sean chuckling in the outer office over the progress of Sean's great battle with the police to which I shall come in a moment, Sean flashing away through the door on to his motor-bike with a sharp eye out for a prowling constable, having latched with Seamus another onslaught upon sundry West Britons and snobs and foes of Irish-Ireland in the town of Navan. . . . Or tumbling out the door on my bicycle to explore the neighbouring towns of Trim and Kells, not missing the monument in the former town erected once to the Duke of Wellington by the awestricken and grateful inhabitants of the county to that famous man, and a very ugly stone monstrosity it was, that expression of their gratitude, I must recall. . . . Or setting forth for the first time to see Tara with very simple ideas as to what I should find there:

*Hosts of Ghosts the meadow-sweet  
All the way to Tara.*

But where are the halls of which Moore sang? You will not find them for they were of wood and crumbled long ago, and unless a learned man takes you to Tara now there is only imagination to rebuild the glories of old on

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the grassy slopes crowned by this Stone of Destiny under which sleep some unknown Croppies who fell in the Ninety-Eight uprising, and a statue of Saint Patrick scarred by some local joker who took a pot shot at his thumb and would have dug up the hill to find the Ark of the Covenant in a drunken freak had not the sharp pen of Arthur Griffith in Fownes Street, Dublin, scratched a note in the *United Irishman* one week and sobered the vandal. Along the Meath roads I went on a bicycle and found a ruined abbey at Bective and a cross in a churchyard at Kells near a crownless Round Tower, and on the cross a kindly journalist with a face like a turkey pointed out Adam and Eve crudely hewn upon a weather-worn Eden. Beside the Boyne the canal wound to Slane where Patrick had lighted his fire and the steamer *Rosnaree* ran bravely with her six knots thither in summer through all the locks past the emerald beauty of Beaupark into the great river, past the bacon factory where the lives of pigs squealed through their slashed throats with a smell of leather and weeds, and barges lumbering after patient horses past a crumbling Norman castle on the far bank. Placid sergeants and constables watched everyone from bullock to *bona fide* trampers to the pubs six miles away on Sundays, very sleek and benevolent under an arch of roses outside a sleepy barracks as often as not and riding on the footpaths on their way to court a maid, or slip into a pub themselves and none too particular whether cyclists lighted up or no, and laughing at stray Sinn Feiners and odd Gaelic Leaguers, too proud and principled to salute the police, and mad enough to speak to them in Irish only, although the auburn-haired constable was a native speaker who could have talked them all into the Croppies' Grave and would have been a Sinn Feiner himself only he had been turned into the Royal Irish Constabulary by family considerations long

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before he had time to think it out. So he contented himself with greeting the more polite Sinn Feiners who sailed into the home of bullocks and peace and rich grass in Irish and smiling at the others and offering to examine them in the first book of O'Growney, and wish in the dear old tongue that the devil would throw them all over the edge of a cliff to find their manners and that the mourners at a wake would shortly raise a death scream in the dawn for them. Past lumbering herds of horned brown and black beasts, and mournful protests from their red and uplifted mouths as an ash-plant drove them onward, flashed the motor-bike of an implacable and hard-eyed foe of the police, Sean, the friend of Seamus, well-fitted to match oath with oath and proverb with proverb had he so minded with the auburn-haired constable. There was war between the motorist and the police over the licence: until they issued it to Sean, John would not pay for it nor the fines accruing, and therewith a merry game of hide-and-seek or rather catch-as-catch-can went on between police and motorist until in the end the law should permit Sean to sign as Sean and pay as Sean and ride as Sean. For there was a great struggle in progress in this time between the Castle and the Gaelic League for the right to write one's name in Irish on cart and legal document, and in County Meath it centred round this motor-cycle which hummed like a snail up to the rose-bowered barracks and past like a roaring and defiant monster with mountains of smoke writing SEAN, NOT JOHN in the eyes and noses of the constables, too late for a capture again. Father O'Farrell, a tall, pale and stately man, dominated the landscape on a magnificent brown horse, saluting gravely. Down the stony slopes through the town hurried the Reverent President to the Seminary, never raising his grey brooding eyes from the pavement, lost in thought and known to the wits as

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"Dinny the Stepper." Down the long green lanes in the evenings stole the courting couples with eyes alert for the prowling priest, who seized the hats of his lady parishioners when he found them cuddling after dusk. In due course they called round for their hats and a sermon on the snares of the flesh. Out of earshot they asked why his reverence never bade certain rich townsmen with drink-sodden faces to moderate their public embraces of huzzies who found favour in their eyes. Or why he never refused the subscription of these same gentlemen always very high on the list of Christmas and Easter dues. For in Navan this method of stimulating subscriptions to the clergy still prevailed. The list read out publicly in church was an ordeal for those families beaten in the race. Twopence made an extra effort next time to pass out twopence-halfpenny. That those who preached the Gospel should live by the Gospel had ample warrant, but this worldly wisdom of the clergy grated upon me nearly everywhere in Ireland from Navan to the Cathedral town, where I once saw the collectors bobbing round with nets on high poles to reach the lofty galleries and some of the Dublin churches where the Mass was accompanied by one prolonged rattle of money and shouting collectors.

I but note this feeling of mine in these memories of Sion as a record of the contrast which so suddenly presented itself between the Catholic community of London fighting for its life against a hostile atmosphere, vigilant criticism, the healthy competition of all creeds and no creed, and this youthful impression of a country where the Church reigned supreme. To claim this Meath picture as representative of Irish Catholicism or as more than an irritating incidental, very understandable from the historic causes which left the Irish clergy as the leaders of the people would be unjust; to claim that

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there were no other types of clergymen even in the Meath of that time would be equally so for the Grecian profile of an erudite and witty priest dismissing the antics of his brethren with a puff of his pipe and a shake of his head even then restored the balance. The real religion of Ireland is quite another thing. "Your Pope can bind you with an oath!" said a foolish critic to the best Irish Catholic I know. "Bah!" he replied, "the only oath your only English Pope tried to impose on us was vomited up in his lap!"

Arrogant clericalism of that time was one of the curses of Ireland, and to some degree still is. To deepen this impression of mine came the clash between the *Irish Peasant* and Cardinal Logue, who used all his influence against the paper from pressure on the proprietors to threats to denounce it publicly as "perniciously anti-Catholic." His only excuse was that some articles which he admitted he had not even read advocated popular control of education in place of the existing clerical system of management. From this started the five years' duel between the *Irish Peasant* and its successor, the *Irish Nation*, and Irish clericalism, which eventually drove my father out of Ireland. It was in reality but one move in the struggle between Sinn Fein and the official Church authorities which as usual backed the dominant political party until it and they were well and truly beaten, and the time came to bless where frowns and hints of Hell-fire had been the order before.

But away with these old battles to the sound of a distant drum beyond the Market Square while the bank steps groaned three times like the fabulous Waves of Ireland in past times, for long have these steps been cold for the Sons of Rest now in the ranks of the Militia marching home bounty-laden from the annual training. Constables and pubs waited breathless while the Square

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filled with shouting, drunken, fighting men who soon crammed the cells of the barrack below the winding hill until space gave out. To-morrow the bounty would be spent and Navan in peace for another year. Down in the Barrack Lane it was a night when money scattered wildly lighted up hours long dull and rain-sodden with whisky. Brains flamed like tar-barrels, and tongues erupted, volcanoes of lurid wordy lava. Biddy and her three daughters, more terrible than twenty Militias marching home there, flared and sputtered most. Biddy was only a half-wit and tippler with bawdy tongue, a wisp of iron-grey hair across her russet, leering face. But when her three daughters drank, the constables blushed and sent for three stout and generous blankets, knowing modesty's veil would be rent soon in broad daylight and Biddy's three powerful daughters affect with blasphemous rendings of their garments the garb of Eve.

These were but specks on the fair face of Meath. The trees fringing the banks of the Boyne, the herds on fields and roads, the ruined tower of some old castle or the moss-mantled wall of some crumbled church rising on a hill over broad acres, bees and lambs and horned beasts and solemn farmers on a stone wall debating skies and harvests and prices, surpassed the old visions in the London shop-fronts. Here was no dust and heat but the rich old earth. Three doors away lived a kindly and sturdy family that showed me all of Meath that sweetens the retrospect: a trotting mare conquering winding hills to the old farm and Bertie showing me all the twists and turns of the grazing spaces and mapping woods and slopes and distant towns to be seen in quick and pleasant phrases; the cool kitchen of the old farm-house where we drank quarts of buttermilk and wandered out to climb overhanging trees and talk with soft-eyed calves and value any heifer or horse at a glance, and Bertie rolling out

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all the Land Acts which he had learned off by rote. Soon there was no need to sit behind the trotting mare, for Jack and Bertie brought me out on a fixed pedal-bike and with their shouts in my ears of warning and encouragement I mastered it with only one toss into the Knacker Begg's expiatory clump of nettles at the foot of the hill near the Canal. Sometimes, under the fruit trees of the farm, ditches were leaped and long jumps taken and impromptu football matches played until we were ready to sit down to rich home-baked bread and butter from the churn, and Bertie's mother wielded the great blue tea-pot, and Bertie's father, Peter, raised the ghost of Parnell and the fierce scenes in the now quiet town of Navan as the Chief had tottered to his grave. . . . Old women in their fury had brandished pitchforks on the main street at the very priests, for they were not minded to mince their words and deeds in the fury of the Meath Election Petition. . . . They remembered the Biblical language in the Bishop's pastoral. . . . Peter spoke without bitterness, raising his great red eyebrows and laughing at the venom of old battles and the speeches he had made on a platform in the Market Square. . . . The shadow of the Parnell Split lingered as he spoke and we looked out through the long, high windows at a great drooping ash. . . . The Split that had riven every family in Ireland. . . . Parnell who held Irish freedom in the hollow of his hand . . . hounded to death by jealous priests and whining Nonconformists. . . . Why were the Bishops always the second line of the British Army of Occupation? . . . The farm vanished and I was back in London and my grandfather speaking of distant Donegal and an old priest who lived as hard and hunger-pinched life as his parishioners and his casual phrase that the priests of Meath lived like princes. . . . Shadows came over my childish dreams of the Church. . . .

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The Church was different here . . . dreary, arrogant sermons and its creed for slaves. . . . Over somnolent Navan at noon and eve rang the Angelus bell, and groups at corners uncovered and prayed. . . . Down the roads in the evenings went the priest to seize the lovers' hats. . . . Behind the constables in the church on Sundays with the solid rolls of fat on their napes I listened to the sermons, and a musty smell came back to me: an old musty box in London with black, ragged books which raved of flaming hells and bats and adders flitting round howling hosts of the lost in an ocean of deathless fire. . . . Scrupulous lists of quaint sins in old prayer-books, priests in London laughed at. . . . Literal tales of Adam and Eve in the Garden rolling out from the pulpit here. . . . Lenten pastorals droning in one's ears with solemn denunciations of the Fenians and women's fashions and the wicked world and verbiage strewn with Scriptural texts and compliments paid by the Hierarchy to themselves. . . . Subscription lists at Christmas and Easter and these hectoring priests who seemed to rule the land. . . . Outside a burst of humour which chases the shadows: "Trust their Lordships to know all about the ladies' wardrobes . . . '*the Church is divine, She even survives the clergy.*'" . . . Hoary yarn of the man who listened to the sermon: "Why, when I am just wavering back to the Faith, does one of these fellows set me off again?"

Thirty miles to Dublin and few people on the roads save the drovers and sprawling, lowing, slipping, dung-splashed herds of brown and black. . . . The magic—fair and sombre—of Ireland went into my blood, and even before I turned towards Dublin two years later the accent and memory of London grew dimmer and a faint nostalgia betimes for the old quick life beside the Thames faded with my dream on the many-voiced ship.



### THREE



SOMETIMES in Ireland a comfortable Civil Servant will come up smiling darkly or an Irishman of an older generation or a young girl wrapt in some dream-pattern like mine on the boat, and ask smugly, ferociously or sadly:

“Why do our young writers all hold up their fellow-countrymen’s faults to foreign countries?” Sometimes the addendum follows, “and for gain.” Or there is talk of “playing to the English gallery” or “the Sewer School.” The young writers and old writers and all the writers who have ever considered the existing opportunities for publishing anything beyond a school-text in Ireland or who know the sublime indifference of the English gallery and pit and stalls to Ireland perforce let question and addendum in one ear and out the other. For some inexplicable reason, Professor Daniel Corkery spoiled his fine book on Synge by pandering to this canting humbug. He coined the word “expatriate” to excommunicate the majority of the Irish race, unctuously quoted the names of Ibáñez, Ibsen and Turgenev, which shattered his case to pieces, and then back to his study of the man he once had the courage to defend as Synge himself emerged from a storm of catcalls from the “expatriate” stage. A great cheer went up from all the moral cowards of Ireland who adopted Professor Corkery’s new word as a bulwark of censorship and an excuse from reading anything that might disturb them, probably including all the works of Professor Corkery himself, one of the greatest minds that ever came out of

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Munster: too great a mind to believe that only those who never leave Ireland know Ireland best. The Professor's literary conscience sent shocked whispers through his sub-consciousness: the fatal name of Ibsen, proudest of expatriates, the fatal name of Ibáñez, Republican expatriate who watered the Spanish mixture more generously with Zola than any Anglo-Irish writer ever dared to mix Irish soil with English roots, Tuurgenev, life-long expatriate less near to Russian life in Paris than James Joyce to Dublin.

The truth was that some demon had turned Daniel Corkery the patriot into Daniel Corkery the provincialist. To leave Ireland often means to know Ireland better, and too few of those who should leave their country for their country's good have the sense to do so. The "expatriates"—only literary expatriates are included in the phrase of opprobrium for some strange reason—do for Ireland what Ireland too seldom does for herself. This is no great virtue on their parts: looking back over their shoulders they see the thing half seen before. The names on the Professor's jumbled Index prove this: D. L. Kelleher turns round and fixes Cork in a ballad like *Padna* for ever; Joyce and Moore all the humanity, glittering speech, murk, malice and life of Dublin; Austin Clarke the dim splendour of the saint and scholars and sinners of old, yielding to his *Bright Temptation*. And very few names in the jumbled Index indeed are the names of those who live on the profits of their Irish writings. Only those who love Ireland so much that they have to write or burst ever really write of Ireland.

Then they have to find publishers. The feelings of British publishers about the Irish market is very truthfully if rudely summed up in the savage remark of a veteran in London: "The Irish public never buys a

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book, and only reads the borrowed review copy." The Irish publishers will publish school-texts and histories and books which never offend anybody. Many of the greatest Anglo-Irish writers are published abroad. Patrick Pearse, on the eve of his death, after long negotiations with Irish publishers managed to get his masterpieces in his last volume of short stories published in Ireland only by consenting to sell the copyright out for six pounds; the second greatest writer in Irish, Padraic O'Conaire, died of starvation in a ditch. It is easy enough to win applause in Ireland if the writer consents to deal with any subject more than ten years old, to curry favour with the political party for the moment on top, to remember all the sex, moral, political, and religious taboos, and above all to respect the personal vanity and prejudices of all the organisers of the sectarian and political cliques who clutter up public life. The alternative is to win recognition abroad and then the slave mind of Ireland after a moment of cynicism and envy bows down and adores. Every Irish writer receives his due ten years after his funeral, unless he manages to get the British to shoot or hang him. But the British cannot shoot and hang all the Irish writers, preferring to read one out of ten. Sometimes a British publisher with a literary conscience looks over the Irish El Dorado and sees the golden nuggets. He then, as strange and uncomprehensible as all publishers ever are, does for the Irish what the Irish are too cowardly or too smug to do for themselves. He encourages the Irish writer to pick up the golden nugget and show it to the world. That some British publishers encourage a type of writing politely called Irish but really the *émigré* propaganda of bitter ascendancy pens in no wise detracts from the credit due to foreign publishers who must support Irish literature on its merits alone.

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But the Old School can never see this. It is a miracle how the Old School does not make the fortunes of the expatriates, for they denounce them all, and some one must presumably buy the copies of the books pilloried. The glow of moral indignation of the Old School demands respect. I knew an Irishman of the Old School who once tackled me in Mooney's in the Strand because I had written an article on Irish literature of to-day and praised certain Irish writers. I go to Mooney's about twice a year to catch an Irish accent and the honest speech of Ireland which shocks Ireland on the platform in Ireland's virtuous and hypocritical moods but which is the speech of Ireland in private, and long may that be so. I was enjoying the vivid speech of this Irishman, and his freedom from euphemisms and his real knowledge of the Ireland he had left years before. I wanted to listen to him much more than make him read me. But Con O'Leary was with me, and he would not rest until I showed our friend what I had written. I had mentioned Con's name and our friend adjusted his spectacles in the mood to praise. He read the article through and looked me over in sorrow and pity. He mounted a stool and seated himself and condoned my youth and inexperience with a courtly preliminary word of explanation and warning that in what he would say there was nothing personal. Then he thundered a quotation in Latin from Horace at me, translated it as meaning that the function of literature was to soften manners, to heighten morals, to inspire, to elevate and to amuse. He followed up with a text from St. Paul, and the glasses danced on the counter, and the whole of Mooney's listened as he went on:

"Too well we know these realists, this Sewer School, these callow country youths who descend on Dublin and shriek aloud to a bored and listless world that in

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Dublin they have visited the stews and reported the ravings of trollops. Too well we know them. We don't want them. Take this fellow, Blank-Blonk, you praise so highly. The less said of Blank-Blonk the better. He and a friend of mine were walking through a Dublin street and Blank-Blonk pointed to a passing female who had found favour in his eyes, no better than she ought to be, and avowed he desired her, and by God! young man, Blank-Blonk followed her and possessed her in the sight of the passing multitude. That's Blank-Blonk for you. The others whom you mention—and the very mention of a name the poet Martial tells us is a meed never to be accorded by the just to the ignoble—have painted a picture of Irish life which, were it even half-true, would call imperatively for the absolute extirpation of the Irish race."

In the days before I found a speck of dust on the emerald of Meath I should have turned down my thumb for Blank-Blonk, whom I later discovered to be of the opinion of Renan, that the orthodox must never be shocked in more than one way at a time. And into the very accents of my friend in Mooney's crept a fear that our writers were telling too much. Virtue cannot always call up frail phantoms to deflect the arrows of a love to hatred turned. The whole of Mooney's soon left off listening to the oration, for I forbore to fan the orator beyond his first peroration. I had heard all he had said years before and knew the other side of his argument. My friend in Mooney's was old and learned in many things, and generally right when he stopped ten years short of the present. I had a cordial invitation from him to visit him in his house on the riverside and continue the discussion. But unfortunately he had turned eighty and joined Saint Finnbarr beyond the skies less than a week later. As we parted in the Strand he

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came back to his argument, for someone mentioned *Ulysses*. "A great book!" he said, with a benign side-glance at me. "A very great book. He would have been the greatest man we have, had he only burned it. Or left it in the jakes he found it in. Good night now, boys, and God bless you all."

All the way home I was back in the El Dorado I had found two years after I left County Meath, and the fuss there about Synge, the Blank-Blonk of that day. It was in the days of which Patrick Pearse wrote: "Ireland in our day, as in the past, has excommunicated some of those who served her best, and canonised some of those who served her worst. We damn a man for an unpopular phrase; we deify a man who does a wrong thing gracefully. The word to us is ever more significant than the deed. When a man like Synge, a man in whose sad heart there glowed a true love of Ireland, one of the two or three men who have in our time made Ireland considerable in the eyes of the world, uses strange symbols which we do not understand, we cry out that he has blasphemed and we proceed to crucify him. When a sleek lawyer, rising step by step through the most ignoble of all professions, attains to a Lord-Chancellorship or to an Attorney-Generalship, we confer upon him the freedom of our cities." But long before Pearse had written that, Synge had set many estimable persons rioting, and legend went that the very police had had to turn their backs or else they might have followed the angry man from Connacht across the footlights. The night Synge died I heard a friend say: "I suppose we should not mention it, but there is one enemy of Ireland the less." A listener with fiery eyes and an angry mane of hair broke in with: "There are some damned ignorant people in this city of Dublin and you are amongst the damndest of them." On the instant,

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challenged and challenger rolled and grappled on the hearth-rug with a glorious clash of fire-irons to be torn apart, gory, defiant and of the same opinion as before. It was an appropriate place to continue the Synge controversy, for farther down the street Synge had died, and each morning Yeats and Lady Gregory had passed the windows to visit him in his nursing-home, "the man in whose sad heart had glowed a true love of Ireland." This clash with fire-irons was in its way a proud salute to Dublin, for there are few cities where men will fight over a playwright's corpse. Otherwise, it was a mere family row like the two men my mother saw in a lane near-by in handgrips. "Ah, leave them alone," said a wise old man, "and don't worry, ma'am, aren't they brothers-in-law?"

There is some excuse for the Dubliners' eternal resentment against those who use pens and typewriters rather than tongues. "Good Heavens!" say the Dubliners when a stranger comes over and picks a random nugget of gold off the streets. "The thick ejot, we have that every day." Sometimes the stranger fashions a quaint or distorted or partial picture of Dublin from the gold, and then the fire-irons clash on all the hearth-rugs of Dublin. Half El Dorado is always right, anyway. But the other half of El Dorado has never learned the obvious truth that the very caricaturists of any people are often unconsciously their best friends. Who loves the Jews the less for Zangwill, the Welsh for Caradoc Evans, or the Irish for O'Casey? *All Quiet on the Western Front* came as a very herald of peace to many Englishmen and women by merely showing that the Hun was plain Karl after all. Thousands, too, have seen a sudden light on the agony of Ireland in the distorted mirror of *The Plough and the Stars*, where O'Casey in his rage against war and the agony of the common

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people mixed passages from Pearse in the dregs of bad porter.

One-sided and distorted, too, is the mighty and mournful epic of *Ulysses*; not all the laughter and light of our Dublin is here, but it is no mere distorted fresco formed of gold and slime. It alone would explain the Irish revolution, for it reveals Dublin as none other than an Irishman could reveal her, an Irishman who at heart loves Dublin, and writes with all the indignation of love, the very pulse of this remorseless and brutal protest. In the very first chapter, Stephen Dedalus cries that he is "the servant of two masters, the one English, the other Italian: the British Imperial State and the Holy, Roman, Catholic and Apostolic Church." Again, "Irish art is the cracked looking-glass of a servant." Ireland is "the old sow that eats her farrow." Father Martindale and Gerald Gould have shaken hands on the proposition that *Ulysses* is a denial of the human soul. "Alas," wrote the first in his penetrating notice in the *Dublin Review* shortly after the book appeared, "that a man who can write such exquisite prose-music when he chooses, who has such erudition, such power of original criticism, such subtlety of intuition and construction, and the possession of mental energy so long-continued, should ever by preference, or because by now he cannot help it, immerse his mind in the hateful dreams of drunkenness, the phantom world of the neuropath; should be at his best when he portrays collapse; should be at his most convincing in his chosen line when murmuring through half a hundred pages the dream memories of an uneducated woman." Truly since Voltaire and Pascal the sons of Ignatius have not had so bad a boy to scold!

Gerald Gould adds that Joyce has put everything in and left everything out. My old friend in Mooney's



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has already been quoted. The very title and the elaborate library of interpretation suggest the darkest doubt about the permanent value of the book. But when we have smiled and sworn at the careful weavers of analogies, a tremendous bow-string twangs in the hand of the Dublin *Ulysses*, rescuing his soiled Penelope from the lovers who have befouled her, but the bow is wielded by Telemachus-Dedalus rather Ulysses-Bloom. Through Joyce's maze of words something more indeed struggles to life than a Dublin gutty's epic gleaned from a lavatory wall; the tangle of the Dublin of that day in the summer of 1904, a picture in large part true as all must feel whose minds are haunted by those hundreds of Dublin folk from Buck Mulligan bathing in the sea with a blasphemous catch and head-dive into the "snot-green splendour" of the Bay to Mrs. Marion Bloom bathing in her sexual reveries without blush or comma. As Leopold Bloom sets out on his twenty hours' journey from breakfast and "premeditative defecation" to Paddy Dignam's funeral round the shops, museums, libraries, printing offices, bars, and brothels of the capital until he climbs into bed at night, a cuckold who has found his spiritual son, Stephen Dedalus chanting a Black Mass amid the ravings of frowsy whores and sodden dreams in a madder glory and wealth of dream and word than all his pilgrimage till then, past the biscuit tin and scorn of the Citizen Cyclops in Barney Kiernan's low pub, past the curiously inadequate Nausica of Sandymount Strand—a city emerges fixed for ever from its whirling in one amazing memory, a city one must grow to love even if one never has known it for all that it is grotesque and twisted and scarred. Two stories link these twin characters and multitudinous scenes, and who shall at the last say that they are ignoble? Is it Stephen who struggles starward through a sordid home life to the

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freedom of negation, obsessed by his mother's death-bed and his proud refusal to bow by even a passing prayer to a faith in which he can no longer believe, or, again, Leopold, sex-racked and perplexed, overshadowed by the loss of his young son, Roddy, who steps over mountains of ordure and oceans of verbal sewage with a burst of poetry into the very brothel as Leopold prepares to guide Stephen to the peace of the cabmen's shelter?

And is Joyce so doleful a Rabelais when he can revivify Barney Kiernan's low pub with the immortal rant of the citizen, that eloquent echo of the relentless and acid propaganda of Arthur Griffith:

"And our eyes are on Europe," says the citizen. "We had our trade with Spain and the French and with the Flemings before those mongrels were pupped. Spanish ale in Galway, the winebark on the winedark waterway."

"And will again," says Joe.

"And with the help of the Holy Mother of God we will again," says the citizen, clapping his thigh. "Our harbours that were empty will be full again, Queenstown, Kinsale, Galway, Blacksod Bay, Ventry in the kingdom of Kerry, Killybegs, the third largest harbour in the wide world with a fleet of the masts of the Galway Lynches and the Cavan O'Reillys and the O'Kennedys of Dublin when the Earl of Desmond could make a treaty with the Emperor Charles the Fifth himself. And will again," says he, "when the first Irish battleship is seen breasting the waves with our own flag to the fore, none of your Henry Tudor's harps, no, the oldest flag afloat, the flag of the province of Desmond and Thomond, three crowns on a blue field, the three sons of Milesius."

"And he took the last swig out of the pint. . . . Much as his bloody life is worth to go down and address his tall talk to the assembled multitude in Shanagolden,

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where he daren't show his nose with the Molly Maguires looking for him to let daylight through him for grabbing the holding of an evicted tenant."

To read *Ulysses* is to revisit Dublin, a Dublin not wholly gone; for Joyce, whom the two eminent critics accuse of denying the human soul, can hold at least the soul of his city in his nets of words. The visit at first sight is a sordid one, and to many readers can never be more. Not only Dubliners resent the picture. Once Con O'Leary had to argue for three months with an English journalist to lend him this banned masterpiece and only got it in the end by pleading his right as an Irish writer and critic, but first he had to swear a solemn oath that the two young Manchester journalists about to visit Dublin should never be allowed to dip into *Ulysses*, not so much to guard their morals as to preserve their minds uncoloured by any dark pictures of Dublin, where the owner of *Ulysses* had spent such full and happy days, whose people he loved and whose fame he would uphold. The good man was right, for *Ulysses* is strong meat and takes long to digest. Yet when the initial nausea over the ordure has gone and this work of genius and affection, never to be repeated and imitated literally only by fools, remains with its irony, wit, detail, and portrayal of an everlasting day, and those who therein passed and struggled and still live on. In vain the politician and professional Catholic (and what is as bad, the tame Protestant chameleon hob-nobbing with the same) will continue to prove that as Ireland is the most sincerely Catholic land in the world to-day all her humbugs must needs be, in public profession at least, Catholic. In vain will all these who have chopped and changed and trimmed with every passing wind continue to howl that Joyce is the Father of the Sewer School, for Joyce has only described the sewer for

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which they are largely responsible. In truth, Joyce is the heir of a great tradition to be found in the *Religious Songs of Connacht* and the very Fathers of the Church, in Egan O'Rahilly, Brian Merriman and many another Gaelic poet. One subsequent justification of Joyce's brutality is the Irish Censorship Act, rushed through the Dail by aid of every poltroon in Ireland (though the Dail to its credit showed more courage than politicians generally show by contemptuously telling the sectarian organisations which wished to administer the Act to mind their own business) and the snuffling time-servers and tame Trinity College professors and Pharisees who thank God that Dublin is saved from the fate of Sodom by a film censor limiting kisses on the silver screen to two seconds, smugly oblivious of the perversion and the festering mental filth beneath this official complacency. They would not thank God quite so much if they had the sense to ask the nearest policeman. But these are only irritating gargoyles on a noble edifice. Let's back to *Ulysses* before some imported religious maniac reads this book in Dublin and goes to his Father the Devil with an apoplectic fit.

Every Irishman who knows Catholicism outside Ireland knows that Joyce is right in his onslaught on the Jansenist vices that warp and twist it too often there. There is the noble temper of Renan in Stephen Dedalus's refusal to kneel even at a death-bed: *Je n'ai pas cru respectueux pour la foi de tricher avec elle. Ce n'est pas ma faute si mes maîtres m'avaient enseigné la logique, et, par leurs argumentations impitoyables, avaient fait de mon esprit un tranchant d'acier. J'ai pris au sérieux ce qu'on m'a appris, scolastique, règles du syllogisme, théologie, hébreu; j'ai été un bon élève; je ne saurais être damné pour cela.* For Joyce has also the final and deeper vision. Not for nothing has he been trained by the Jesuits and

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reared on Aquinas, even if to-day he no longer takes them as guides. On the Judgment Day perhaps Satan will condemn the life of a large portion of present-day Ireland out of the mouths of Dedalus and Bloom. His brief will be incomplete, nay, fatal, for some Archangel rising shall open *Ulysses* at random, saying: "Here was integrity, courage and truth. Here alone was the world-shattering Word spoken, in Dublin, a city as eternal as Rome and as brave in mind as Athens." And Saint Finnbarr slightly spoil the fine effect by shouting indignantly: "Perhaps, but a Cork man wrote it anyway!" Ignatius Loyola will offer James Joyce a silver sword and the Dumb Ox of Sicily roar his praise until Patrick judging all the Irish, poor man, on his promised throne for which he baffled an angel in prayer, descends and tucking *Ulysses* under his arm beckons Joyce to head Patrick's particular millions through the gates of Eternal Peace, while smug on their beds of fire below shall roast all the professional politicians and censors of Eire for ever and ever and ever, smug and smug and smuggler on the hob of Hell itself. Amen.

Which brings me back to the dust I found on the roads and roofs of El Dorado.

## FOUR



IN swiftly changing London of to-day where often it you neglect one street for a month or so, a row of skyscrapers meets your eyes and another landmark beloved of Roman or Norman and venerable to the wise passing look of Dr. Johnson has vanished with no requiem but an orchestra of pneumatic drills, amid some quick gleam of London's beauty, say, as some silvered fish of a Zeppelin hovers in the evening sky between the Byzantine tower of Westminster Cathedral and a great star over the roofs of Millbank, there are moments when I am again in the Dublin I knew of old:

*I loved her from my boyhood,  
She to me was as a fairy city of the heart. . . .*

The wit of some Cockney tram or bus conductor bears me on a magic carpet to Sandymount Green and on to the Martello Tower that overlooks the Strand. For in my first years in Dublin the little single-deck Sandymount tram often brought me home, and the conductor had a beard so snowy and tapering, a face so reposeful and gentle that his name was inevitable: "Saint Joseph." Yet every time the little tram touched the Green, he downed a pint, and the night the man from Glasgow complained of the high fare, Saint Joseph told him roundly to go back to Glasgow by a fiery route and not be robbed. . . . There is the Strand sweeping in its ridgy brownness towards the red fortress of the Pigeon House, past the wall where the sailor tried to teach me to swim, and I floated in a circle on one finger for all

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his pains, and Merrion Gates clanging to let the trains whistle by with white clouds over the sea-wall towards Blackrock, where Joseph Clarke and I went swimming and cursed the brute with his gun and the shrieking gull which had fallen with blood-stained breast on the sands after he had fired . . . and the tide surging in, white-horsed and singing . . . and a golden moon over all the roofs of Sandymount . . . or a golden sun at dawn near the wall by the Castle, and the little bearded man with the Francis Thompson eyes going into Mass early every morning before Saint Joseph punches his ticket for a passage to a busy office on the quays, with a jolly bellman clang-clang-clanging outside, and the little bearded man within sells whole streets of houses and warehouses of furniture with decisive hammer and chant.

Down from the Strand slopes the road to our house and the house next door, where the old Fenian and his son and his daughter-in-law live. An iron and courteous man like all those of his creed in his generation. . . . Ten years in prison for a deed his brother did for Ireland's sake, and hoping still for the fall of the Castle, red-faced and suavely genial and a wind from the history books in his quiet words: "I am tired of all their leagues and clubs and talk of Irish industries and language, keen and all as the young fellows are. Leagues! I was reared in a hard school, and I only believe in the One League." In his little drawing-room, he broods, hoping, stubborn old Henry Flood, remembering the day at Manchester when England's cities quaked and howled at the Fenian name, revolvers spitting over the heads of encircling mobs, and three dying with an immortal prayer: "God Save Ireland." "James Stephens, the Head Centre, was a good man . . . yes," said the quiet voice, "they blamed him for not fighting in Sixty-Five and Sixty-Seven, but that is a long time ago . . . he had no arms and no

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money, and I do not think them right to blame him.” (To the Manchester Martyrs’ Anniversary Celebrations organised by the Freedom Clubs, cloaking the Irish Republican Brotherhood stirring once more, came this old Fenian and heard Pearse speak, Pearse who did not know the Fenians whom he had sought in the moonlight but never found were now before him, heard Pearse speak and was moved to say: “A fine young man with brave words, but does he mean them? He does? That’s well.” Out in 1916 on the quiet this old Fenian marched, came home calmly, and “and glory be to God, enough documents to hang every one in the house in a box of his upstairs, never saying a word where he was going, and never a word when he returned.”)

Loud knockings at the door in the early morning, and the sporty milkman has halted his jingling cart and dashing horse. The horsy play-boy with kid gloves and dancing eyes and a red-brick face who saved a debtor from suicide when he caught him with a revolver to his head: “I gave him dog’s abuse and sensible advice and told him the money he owed us all wasn’t worth the risk of wearing out his little antimacassar on a warm grid-iron with the Old Boy for company. So he made me out a cheque, and let the rest of his creditors go whistle.” He pours out the milk with a generous tilley and says he had to build a whole row of houses for the poor as a penance from the Church Street Fathers for all the water he confessed putting in his milk, but the holy men haven’t got him to take the pledge himself or keep away from horses, fast or slow, on any racecourse. . . .

Rat-tat-tat, and the man with the fish is on the doorstep, a stinking fish he brought us: “I kept it specially for you, ma’am!” His pink-rimmed eyes blink and an odour of beer goes from his little mouth and dirty yellow bristle of a moustache through the hall . . . an anthrax



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under his arm, but he feels as strong as a lion and will bring us the pick of the Bay every week. . . . The man with the basket of apples is next with his plausible tongue: that basket hit a recruiting sergeant in its day and he has done six months for that violent deed, though he had to join the Militia once in a way for the money, but the basket bears only the apples of Ireland, for none others will he have but our own little islanders. . . . Sam comes from the grocery near the Green, gap-toothed and asquint, waving his hands at the wasps in summer when they smell the porter off him. . . . His auburn hair burns with splendour as he hands over six Guinness into the house over the way, with a loving tipsy smile to the glaring housewife, and a shout that shakes the windows: "Here they are, six of 'em!" . . . The beggar woman knocks, the loquacious one who gets so much tea from the kind Protestant lady round the corner and lives in a room where, saving your presence, the rats ate the back out of her best skirt. . . . She takes the tea from the kind lady and leaves all the tracts and Bibles she gets along with it for the rats if they want pious reading.

My father comes in, fairyland in his eyes, and humming an Irish air, his dark beard waving, Gaelic books and mystic tomes under his arm. He leaves three copies of the *Irish Nation* on the table and vanishes into his study upstairs. A wave of romance and life and the new currents stirring in the country comes from the columns. . . . P. S. O'Hegarty has started another controversy. . . . He scalps the Socialists or announces a new series of a hundred articles on history or books or his pet, physical force, and in the correspondence columns angry controversialists howl questions and challenges at P. S. O'H., "Sarsfield," "Lucan," "Landen," and the whole half-dozen P. S. O'Hegartys. Notes from the provinces and afar. . . . Seamus excavates more blue books. . . . One,

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Fred Ryan, returned from Egypt, wars upon all physical forces and Nationalists and Gaelic Leaguers and clergymen and Marxian Socialists with the utmost courtesy and persuasiveness. . . . "Irial" is his pen name as all the world knows. He hurls his weekly javelin at Arthur Griffith, his former ally. . . . The Gaels like him not. . . . The Socialists bristle weekly and hurl shibboleths at him. . . . He is a militant agnostic and it is said his father took the utmost pains with his upbringing to produce this result. . . . This week he crosses swords with P. S. O'Hegarty, who has mobilised "Sarsfield" and "Landen" and "Lucan" to squelch him: "Begod, I wish I was as sure of any one thing as Tom Macaulay is of everything." . . . I look with impatience at the riches locked behind the Gaelic letters and feel their beauty, and wonder whether I shall ever learn that language, for it is still a mystery, and I have only ten words and in my heart hate the arrogance of the kilted Gaels and fierce-eyed men in tweeds who roll out their Irish conscious of knowledge or mimicking my alleged English accent, for not all the Gaels are as kind as Padraic O'Conaire or as courtly as Michael Breathnach. . . .

I wander afield in El Dorado, through her squares and by-streets and towards the barrows on the quays, on to George Webb's bookshop with its stacked piles of tomes, down slums which sicken me and bursts of wild speech startling to my sedate ears. . . . About this time I discovered the Socialists and listened to the orators under the shade of the Bank of Ireland. A wild-eyed Dublin working-man always attended these meetings and gnashed his teeth: "Listen to them. Telling me that an Englishman is my brother!" Between the Sinn Feiners and the Socialists it was war to the knife, and this wild-eyed questioner followed the Socialists everywhere, growling his chorus. Arthur Griffith down in Fownes

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Street will have none of this foreign humbug and internationalism and humanitarianism and universalism, and his mad blue-eyed echo sees to it that the message shall be spread: *Carthago delenda est*. But the Dubliners hardly stop to listen to the fierce debate between two insignificant and cranky cliques. There is no room for novelties in this placid, easy-going, melancholy Dublin, with its casual faith in John Redmond, a half-hope of Home Rule some time or other, a half-regret for the Irish language, a wilderness of slums and lodging-houses, only lighted by the Oireachtas in the Rotunda when the Gaels flock in with pipes playing and talk the heads off the sceptics for a week. Then indeed another Dublin emerges, a Dublin yet to shake the world, a Dublin that is always there, but a Dublin for all its fire and faith on the brink of despair in these days, so mean-spirited and so cynical and so provincial to the core is this other and greater Dublin. One day in O'Connell Street I see John Redmond unveil the Parnell Monument and bear away no kindly memory or great phrase from his polished but colourless oration: all I remember is a grey, cold face, a cloth falling, and a solitary cry from the crowd: "We have a higher aim!" So much for the Leader of the Irish Race at home and abroad. He was more alive in the caricatures of the irreverent *Leprachaun*, hooked-nosed, futile and pathetic. The sharp pen in Fownes Street scratched away at Redmond every week and nearly scratched up some sympathy for his victim, so living were the words and so remote his victim from a place in the heart and life of youth. That is among those who were influenced by Arthur Griffith; the vast mass of Dubliners echoed the cry of the hour: "Trust the Old Party and the Old Leaders and Home Rule Next Year."

After the writings of Connolly fell into my hands and

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I had had several arguments with the Socialists, I was far more interested in Socialism than in the Old Party and the Old Leaders. I decided to look up the Socialists and ask them a few questions. Into an upstairs room in Parliament Street I walk with a parcel of groceries under my arm, an aroma of coffee from the bulky brown parcel. I rejoiced to carry parcels under my arm since I had heard both in Navan and in Dublin that it was considered by the respectable an awful thing to do. I was amused once in Grafton Street to scandalise a most revolutionary poet with my brown parcel. He saw it suddenly and came down from the clouds and edged right into the Café Cairo with horror in his dreamy eyes. At least the Socialists would know better than that, and it was my intention to ask them what exactly was the difference between this revolutionary Socialism they talked of and the Socialism of the Fabian Essays. The great beard of Karl Marx on a pamphlet fascinated me more than the explanation of Karl's doctrines inside. A Socialist catechism I read reminded me painfully of that green-covered book in Westland Row and not that very fine little blue-covered book I shall mention anon. Round the table sat half a dozen men already known to me by sight. Comrade Lyng was there with bowler a-tilt, red tie a-slant, wistful face and flowing moustaches, a mighty haranguer of the multitude, and the deadly antagonist of the wild-eyed man who would not have any Englishman for his brother. I asked for pamphlets. Over the mantelpiece, Karl Marx glowers behind his beard, a benign glower. Comrade Lyng searches in a cupboard. Under a mellow light emerges the handsome beard and glowing eyes of William O'Brien: he is the only man present who jokes, grimly, with a quiet smile. He talks to some one beside him about a tremendous row in progress between Connolly and Daniel de Leon.

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The last name is familiar to me on various pamphlets, which have fired the wild-eyed man to further protest: Englishmen are bad enough without bringing in a lot of New York Jew-men to corrupt the Catholic city of Dublin, a gang of toe-rags who want to destroy whatever industries the bloody English have left us and set up a World Republic with the help of the Grand Orient and every bowsie from James Street, Monto and the Coombe. De Leon is a forerunner of the Syndicalists and his influence had drawn Connolly to the United States. Just now Connolly and he have fallen out, it appears, and he has accused Connolly of being the secret agent of the Jesuits sent into the only True Fold of the Universal, Holy, Apostolic Marxist Church to deceive the Very Elect. Comrade Lyng and I talk about religion and Socialism, and an argument flares up between two present: in the end the Church drives all the Socialists out, but how can any one object since the Church has no room for the Revealed Truth of the Materialist Conception of History. In the intervals of argument, I ask Comrade Lyng what the Dublin Socialists have in common with the Fabian Society, and a look of fire and pity from him and a gurgle somewhere in the dark beyond the mellow light tell me the answer before I have finished the question. The argument goes on. "Catholic Ireland," says a working-man far back in the shade, "where they tell us we are slandering the country when we point to the people rotting in their tenements, to the women driven to sell their bodies for food on the streets and Canal banks of this holy city, to the patriots who think any working-man can live on sixteen shillings a week as that old cod, ex-Lord Mayor Tim Harrington, the Party light with the beer-shark's dial, told the assembled multitude." The voice is as bitter as the face is grey and lined, and there is little joy in the squinting

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eyes as they come into the range of lamplight. The voice wails and rasps into a Faith as world-wide and tenacious as that of the Church, as fiery and as electric as that revolutionary Nationalism it seeks to brand as an illusion.

Apart from William O'Brien, Comrade Lyng is the most sympathetic. They answer my questions and tell me books to read. I depart with several pamphlets after Comrade Lyng has evaded my pressing questions as to how and when he is going to have his revolution. He tells me he cannot name any date, and though he is a revolutionary Socialist having nothing in common with other milk-and-water organisations, there may be no violent revolution at all since history records that ruling classes sometimes abdicate through wisdom or weakness. He quotes Karl Marx, whose face over the mantel, omniscient and aloof, approves. One name and one presence pervades the little room: Connolly away in the States. He is the master spirit who has called and held these men together, but somehow they lack his reality and fire. There is something sterile about the group with their long phrases culled from their God over the mantel and their aloofness both from the bright-garbed Gaels in kilt and classroom and the wild-eyed working-man who dogs and curses all their meetings. Only Lyng and William O'Brien seem conscious that they live in Dublin; the rest are a sect conning pamphlets and that long row of Marxist works in the bookcase yonder. The Irish language makes them smile, and again they smile at the ideal of a free Ireland. Griffith could write and talk them all under the table. Yet the voice in the darkness who hates the priests and patriots somehow is real, as real as the dank riverside and stinking tenements, the cap-crowned, livid, hopeless, half-fed workers with lined faces and rotting teeth and casts in their eyes, their swarming children and betimes drunken wives, no book

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worth reading in their sorry homes and little romance save a picture of Parnell or Emmet or a red light before a statue of the Virgin or Christ. What joy or wisdom has the Socialist God over the mantel for them? But the Socialists are right in this too: what change or hope for them when a Green Flag flies over the Castle at the end of the street? . . . I read more and more of the propaganda and literature of Socialism, and it leaves its mark upon my mind. Sometimes I go to Socialist meetings down in the Ancient Concert Rooms. The wild-eyed working-man is there, heckling and denouncing and waxing wrother and wrother. A venerable gentleman in black also frequents these meetings much. His views, though emphatic, are uncertain in general on most subjects but one. He always rises to start the discussion with the rhetorical question: "Who are the two greatest enemies of the human race, Mr. Chairman?" This question he always answers himself: "England and Rome!" Why he never clearly explained, for the rest of his speech dealt with other matters. At last the exasperated Socialists spiked his guns by putting up a questioner to ask and answer his own question. He with undoubted eloquence gave the room to understand that the greatest enemy of the human race was the man who had asked his question. So he continued to ask it until James Connolly came back to Dublin. That night he asked it for the last time, for Connolly turned on him with biting phrases, saying he himself in one sense was a most determined anti-clerical, but there was another form of anti-clericalism which made all decent men blush, and the old gentleman belonged to the second school. A notable speaker there was Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, bowling over the enemies of Woman Suffrage: she used to predict that when political freedom in any form came her real battles would begin, a promise she kept.

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All through the *Irish Nation* was fighting a losing battle. Sometimes Leonard came with knitted forehead and his bird-face clouded. He is alive to the secret campaign against the paper which curtails the advertisements and revenue from the printing business and deftly pulled strings which whisk the *Irish Nation* off the news-agents' counters and scare off possible supporters. . . . Orthodox Sinn Feiners shy at the space given to the Labour organisations to state their case against the narrow views of Arthur Griffith. . . . Between the *Irish Nation* and *Sinn Fein* there is friction and even animosity. . . . A great wave of caution comes from confessionals and pulpits and visiting clergymen dropping gentle hints and sweeps many Gaelic Leaguers off the subscription list of the *Irish Nation*. . . . It is unheard of to criticise the clergy so openly and flirt with theosophy and modernism. . . . Socialism too. . . . Think what you like but don't write it. . . . It will be all the same in a hundred years. . . . Ink drums and paper bales become a problem, and the wages, already small, shrink more. . . . Leonard's face clears suddenly and he laughs and tells us that the new linotype man has been persuaded to join the St. Vincent de Paul Society by the other printers, but first they had to take him out into the backyard and teach him how to bless himself. Leonard goes back to Temple Lane singing:

*The man who kisses a pretty girl,  
And goes and tells his mother,  
Ought to have his lips cut off  
And never kiss another!*

One day we moved from Sandymount to a tall and roomy house in Lower Mount Street, and settled down there with Leonard and Michael and Sean and Seamus and my Aunt Bridget and others in due season.



## FIVE

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THE great house with its basement and lofty rooms was on the main road to Dunleary, within a step of Merrion Square, where a stand of jarveys waited for their fares, staring at doctors' brass plates across the tram-lines in the day-time and talked about pints on moonlight nights, hurling full-bodied adjectives and snatches of comment and tittle-tattle over the heads of the passers-by. A short walk down some dusty side streets brought you to the slums or hospitals or boarding-houses or the Canal with its trees and barges. On Sundays there was St. Andrew's Church at Westland Row, with the saints on the walls the immortal Edward Martyn had had painted, gentle-faced saints with Irish names to astonish even the learned in hagiography. I found no Saint Desmond there, but to my sister's delight she found a Saint Maeve on the walls. A few paces onward up Leinster Street and Clare Street and there was the Edward of legend living over his tobacconist's shop just round the corner from the Kildare Street Club. Dublin just then loved him, for George Moore had begun to make him immortal and several others with him. It seemed George was bringing coals to Newcastle, and many were the jokes about George's great crusade to save the Irish language, although Edward was famous for falling asleep at the Gaelic League meetings when he in his turn was saving the Irish language. But Edward's pictures every Sunday appealed to a wider audience than George's pen-pictures. A rattle of money in the collection boxes, and the great sea flowed around the pictures of the gentle-faced saints,

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the great sea of the poor of Dublin worshipping, a sea of bent and grey and bobbing heads, flowing out to its one-room homes at the close of the Mass and wearing out the feet of some statue with the pathetic and passing touch of its many fingers, a sea which moaned its hopes and its visions, its sins and its degradation into the ears of the priests waiting in the confessionals every Saturday, a sea of wan, lined and scarred faces, a sea of smells and pitiful raiment railed off from the prosperous Catholics of Merrion Square. Even from the pulpit came this revelation of the Dublin underworld so close at hand, balanced on the finest edge of Heaven and Hell; from the midst of the stately and ordered eloquence of the preacher a hideous light blared with sudden terrible words on the life of the slums behind Merrion Square: the night before there had been a murder, some drink-sodden husband had sent the soul of his wife whizzing through her slit throat. The contrasts of Ireland are sudden and terrible: placid, comfortable Merrion Square, this grey and patient sea of the poor of Dublin, and then a splash of blood and bad whisky, and an escape to some world wider than a one-roomed home. . . . The ripple in the sea subsided, and for many Sundays again mere rhetoric and text flowed on; but what wonder that the eyes of the preachers were sad and their faces white and stern and wrinkled and no reflection of Edward's saints?

But there is no need to linger in the grey world behind Westland Row. Back to the great squares or to the heart of the city or the colours of Grafton Street or the trams which sail to Dunleary and the Bay. Dublin hardly notices the slums, although one Jim Larkin is moving among them and banding the men and women in the factories together, and some years ahead there will be scenes outside Westland Row Station when the

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politicians of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the clergy and a screaming mob of the Dublin poor storm outside, united from very mixed motives in a protest against the Strike Leaders' move to send the children away from their stepmother of a city while the strike lasts. But that is all in the future. Just now everything is as grey and as colourful, as dark and as light as it always is in Dublin, and there is no very definite sign that to-day will not be exactly like to-morrow.

We settled into Mount Street and talked, mostly in Irish, of the New Ireland that was to be. Despite the slums so near at hand and my father's struggle to keep his paper afloat against boycott and apathy and the deft strings and vinegar whispers, these were happy days, and for me they were summed up in books, in the language revival and a voluntary silence at meals. I could not speak Irish with any confidence nor understand much more than an odd phrase, for I was in the early twilight of O'Growney still and Sean and Michael and Joseph Clarke generally conversed in fluent Irish until Seamus devastated them with his fierce and humorous outbursts and satirical asides. Generally my father sat lost in thought until some remark stirred him to argument and reminiscence: Swinburne in the Pines near Putney Common shut out from the human voice until Theodore Watts Dunton spoke to him, then the deep music and thunder of his speech filled the room . . . Legends of the South . . . the Devil behind a bush whistling *The Pretty Girl Milking her Cow* to delay the priest going on a sick call, and a bad name for that Gaelic tune from that out . . . the moral of Johnny O'Nale's bank-note . . . the note issued by the local bank and cashed after a wrangle between a thrifty man and a generous man after they had done their business on a market-day . . . they had their glass of whisky

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. . . and next day the bank broke and the Johnny O'Nale note wasn't worth twopence. . . . Visitors from North and South who had passed through the *Irish Nation* office. . . . Standish O'Grady handing in his new articles of the commune he wanted the Dublin clerks and other workers to start on modest subscriptions among the hills with an eagle soaring overhead and a bed of roses for them all. . . . Pet scheme of Standish O'Grady to avoid the violent revolutions he sensed long before the upheavals of 1913 and 1916. . . . Fantasy and blinding flashes of a warning from the silver-haired Tory Communist seer building his house with his own hands up on Howth. . . . A. E. down in the Hermetic Society. . . . A visit from Larkin. . . . Letters from the clergy of advice and blame. . . . This new Irish book . . . that new Irish book.

Behind the table stood his bookcase with a stretch of deep green and gold on the upper shelf, Irish Texts Society volumes and Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy* shading downwards into the yellow and black of the Gaelic League publications underneath. . . . Canon O'Leary's folk-worlds of history and legend . . . several rows of the Temple Classics . . . Herbert Spencer in a lone corner . . . Bedell's Irish Bible . . . *Aylwin* with a black scrawling inscription back and front . . . Matthew Arnold . . . an olive Shakespeare . . . a citron Daudet . . . Bibles in divers tongues . . . Schopenhauer. Among the books which stirred me and gleamed in Temple blue and gold through the glass (like the blue-bound volumes of Tolstoy that Seamus lent me with a quizzical smile from time to time, but sometimes gripped tight beneath his arm with an emphatic proclamation that this volume would be inflicted by him upon no one) was Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. It was this book in my pocket which highly amused the Christian Brothers at

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Westland Row whither I now went to wrestle with the Intermediate texts and convince my teachers that beyond writing I had little interest in much else, though they did their best to win me over to mathematics like their forerunners in the Kennington Road and on Denmark Hill, finding me very sound, however, in religious knowledge as befitted the winner of six fine certificates for that away in London.

The Westland Row Brothers never succeeded in teaching me Irish, indeed they nearly succeeded in making me hate it for the rest of my days. This was not their fault. The grotesque and now happily dead cramming mill and grinder of minds called the Intermediate was responsible. The Christian Brothers were justly famous for their Irish grammars and text-books and their zeal in the language revival when that cause had few friends. But to gain results under the Intermediate system every subject had to be learned by heart, with the result that the majority of victims hated the sight of books for the rest of their days, although they mastered every text and knew every subject amazingly well until the examination lists gave the signal that Shakespeare and Milton and Racine were well and truly "done" for ever. Under the Intermediate system, for instance, especially in Westland Row where the harassed teachers had to drive a very mixed collection of minds through an appallingly formidable programme against time, languages were taught on the peculiar system of "doing" texts so thoroughly that each pupil learned all the ancient and modern tongues by spelling them into their memories. In Westland Row I have sat under a lay teacher and loathed the very look of the Irish text as he laboriously translated the Irish word by word, mumbling the pronunciation which he knew quite well, but his ear too intent on the bell and his eye leaping ahead to reach the

point he must reach so that the text might be crammed to weariness again and again throughout the year. His pupils wrote in the English translation word by word under the text and learned it by heart. It was amusing enough to the purists to trap the poor victims in French and learn that "horse" was "c-h-e-v-a-l," but in Irish it was even more ludicrous when the long rows of asperated and eclipsed lines sometimes escaped from the memory on to the tongue. Exercises in translation and composition were set at random and there was little scope for the teacher to pay individual attention to his pupils and fire their imaginations. And in Westland Row, perhaps more than elsewhere in the Christian Brothers' schools, the homes of not a few of the pupils were poor soil in which to plant enthusiasm and culture, for the mark of bad food and poor housing were plain on their faces and tongues. This was evident although the past roll of the Brothers' pupils bore many famous names in the commercial, literary and general life of Dublin. The Brothers educated poor and comfortable alike, and even made no distinction in creed, for there were Jews on the Westland Row roll most courteously and scrupulously educated by the Brothers. During religious instruction or prayers, on a pleasant smile or nod from the Brother in charge, the Jews retired—objects of envy or curiosity to some of us, but strangely enough never of the keen wit of their class-mates. The Brothers were partly responsible for this as the strap had been known to go vigorously into action on the unhappy hands of the too-inquiring pupil who slyly examined a quiet little Jewish boy upon the plot and moral of *The Merchant of Venice*. The Brothers when I knew them tried their best to make the Intermediate mill as human as it could be made. One dark-haired and enthusiastic Brother who afterwards returned to

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ordinary life, as was not so uncommon in this famous semi-lay order, since its members were unbound by strict and perpetual vows, once took me aside during class hours and read me Canon O'Leary's historical novel in Irish, which gives a vivid picture of the Danish invaders and the triumph of Brian at Clontarf. He gave me wise encouragement to struggle ahead with Irish and other things in spite of the quaint methods the examination system imposed on the school. He talked kindly of my father and his paper, then more and more outspoken in its criticism of the political attitude of the Bishops and the general attitude of the clergy to free discussion. This dark-haired enthusiast spoke much also of Patrick Pearse, who had passed through Westland Row with his brother Willie, afterwards teaching there. Later, I was to hear Pearse's affectionate and amusing memories of Westland Row or to bear a remembrance to him from some one of the Brothers I met in the street. And I was always glad to hear these messages, for they unlocked Pearse's memory and reminiscent tongue.

Sometimes in these hours on the benches at Westland Row I stared up at the glass and wood partitions and thought of Brother Oswald away in his little classroom looking out on pond and tall trees waving between the porch under his window, and chestnut horse galloping wildly under an avenue of wind-bowed greenery, tapping the board before him with his willow stick and "Ut you fellow you!" Or Brother Jerome in Kennington Road reading out a stirring romance of Andreas Hofer to us, or Brother Hyacinth tactfully explaining the ins and outs of the theory of evolution, or Brother Edmund driven to fury when we annoyed him, or that rasping Brother George whose very smile was a menace, or that quite other Brother George in Kennington whose smile

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was a key to the heart. At Westland Row there was one grey-faced Superior who took it for granted, it seemed to me, that God had made Ireland as red as the rest of the British Empire on the big map in the classroom; betimes he insinuated, or to my Sinn Fein sensitiveness appeared to insinuate, that Ireland was only a part of the United Kingdom freed by Daniel O'Connell and now destined to bring England back to the Faith and then China to the Faith, and region after region thereafter. He had no malice, and corrected himself with a wry smile once as I looked what I felt at his remark that the "Union Jack" was "our flag." He added soothingly, as if it were hardly worth mentioning and very self-evident, that of course the harp on the green was our flag too. A quiet colourless man wrapped in himself or his meditations, perhaps he never really cared what flag ever flew anywhere so long as his pupils got through the Intermediate with credit and those underneath all the flags on earth managed to save their souls. In our case this was effected by word-perfection in the verbose, green-covered and ill-printed Maynooth Catechism. This book aroused very violent emotions in me from the first moment I saw it. My affections had been earlier given to a well-printed, concise-worded and blue-covered book which had won me my six fine certificates. On stylistic grounds alone I was all for the little blue book.

Not that the Brothers relied upon the green book as our main guide-book to Heaven, however much we crammed it on the eve of religious examinations. The lives of the saints were also read to us. Sometimes they were lives of the saints in the good old style where ten words were always used where one might have sufficed. I classed these goody-goody rigmaroles of self-torturing pietists with the little green book. But I



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found as weird a fascination in them as I had found in the similar collection in the dusty old leather box in London years before: the Brothers were never as lurid in their reading as these old musty books: there in that musty box were the devils who came in the night to strangle those who had forgotten to say their prayers and to spare sleepy sinners who had rolled into the blankets with one drowsy "Hail Mary," and good cardinals who entered the houses of Italian noblemen to point at nude statues and pictures with reproachful requests that those poor people should be clothed in the name of purity and charity alike, and saints sin-stricken who counted their self-inflicted lice like beads and dragged themselves in the dust before statues of the Virgin, and howling Hells with bats and adders flitting through clouds of sulphur around the lost souls in an ocean of deathless fire.

The Brothers, however, were not Jansenists or Puritans but skilful moulders of the material that Dublin had sent them, and in that material lurked all the violent contrasts of Ireland. Sometimes an echo of the Rabelaisian vocabulary of the slums rose in playground and classroom, or in some sudden gleam a flash of that deep instinct of the Irish which sends them into revolutions and hermits' cells or wafts the towers of some cathedral above a nest of slums or crowns history's vigil with a glow of red and purple, a cross of aeroplanes above Dublin Bay and thundering cannon. All this the Brothers watched and moulded, the restless modern world a preoccupation with them and the dangerous books to be found in years to come. One Brother Walsh in this last matter had more sense than all the Censorship Boards and Free State politicians who have made a bid for popularity by shrieking against lubricity and atheism. He shook his head at us and told us we should undoubtedly be happier

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if we obeyed Mother Church and followed his own urgent advice and left all books against faith and morals alone. The Church would give learned men permission for grave and proper reasons to consult such works. But he supposed we would, despite all warnings, read such works. Sighing, and with more eloquent appeals to leave such alluring territory unexplored, he said his wise word. This book complex vexed him sorely, and he chose his speech and knitted his brows. If we would read these unnamed books, then let us always read both sides and take no printed word for an infallible Pope. Then he went back to his life of the saint for the day, and dwelt in the Middle Ages once more with his pupils.

Which brings me back to my copy of *Sartor Resartus*. In the science hall a senior pupil, an Intermediate Exhibitioner and star who had a real love of books which lighted up two big amber eyes under great bushes of brow, saw me check the height of some liquid in a measuring-glass by aid of one of Carlyle's white margins. Some time after the Exhibitioner and the Brother in charge sought me out, highly amused, and cross-examined me on the pleasure I found in such a work. I was famous for my knowledge of words, for I could give most rare and recondite ones with meaning complete from any text in an instant even as Quinn smiled a baffled, whimsical smile and I whispered it in his ear or the Brother cut short Patsy Farrell's jocose evasions and turned to me. It was the words and odd phrases and the tumult of Carlyle that stirred me vaguely: I loved his thunder even when his lightnings passed me by. After my cross-examination, both the Brother and the Exhibitioner advised me to give Carlyle a rest until I reached the mature age of eighteen, when they assured me I should find the book very helpful and more than a plunder-house for words, but even then not to ape the accents

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of Thomas in ordinary conversation and correspondence, there being perhaps more smoke than light in his tempests. This Exhibitioner and I often had long discussions on history, for I fiercely annotated all my history books wherever it seemed to me that the Whig dogs were getting the best of it. I still recalled the green flag with harp I had carried over my shoulder on Mafeking night, and Old Mac pointing to the many flags from London windows and growling to all my questions on Peace night: "To-morrow they will tell you the Boers have been beaten, but don't you believe a word of it! The scoundrels have thrown dust in the eyes of the world again. They never won a war yet, take that from me. And never started one without a pack of Irish fools to help them." Sinn Fein propaganda guided my pencil over the field of Waterloo, and between classes in Westland Row I took part in many arguments, always remembering the best facts and most crushing retorts on the way home. It delighted Brother Walsh to gather his pupils round him in recreation hours and encourage them to debate whatever stirred in their minds from the books they read or public questions or the saints he read aloud in the noonday hour or some case of conscience. He was always such an impartial chairman that even now I could not label him or state what side he favoured in the then obscure controversy of Sinn Fein and the Irish Party. Sinn Fein at the moment was generally described as a clique run by factionists and cranks and soreheads while the very newsboys summed it up in the witticism: "Sinn Fein! Sinn Fein? Shinbone!" As for the old Fenians they were all dead, except Tom Clarke in his tobacco shop or old Henry Flood in Sandymount or living on in their memories, picturesque failures hidden in history books, unheeded by the peace-loving citizens even while the Dublin traffic rolled con-

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temptuously past the solitary stone laid to Wolfe Tone's memory at the top of Grafton Street in the year 1898 with pomp and shouting and baton charges and ever since forgotten.

Down Mount Street and past the green of the Square and a brisk walk and a turn up Kildare Street and I was in the best part of Dublin for me in those years: the National Library where all the world with a collar and tie might enter and ransack the treasures of the ages. Father Dineen always sat at a table preparing his Irish Dictionary in its future fullness and completeness of definitiveness or resurrecting the poets of Munster with suitable veils to their erratic strayings into taverns and wildness and heresy *en route* to fame in his editions and an edifying death-bed. Sometimes he turned earthwards, his lost blue eyes and wan face quickening, to read a light novel to refresh his mind before he passed through the turnstile for a breath of air or bent over the counter to talk amiably to the assistants.

In their way these assistants struck me as being as learned as Father Dineen or any one else in the commonwealth of letters and lore. They always warned you not to bother about the catalogue near the turnstile, but to ask them first since their memories were so good that they knew every book on every shelf. Here I read Balzac and George Borrow and Alison's *History of Europe* and Mazzini and John Mitchel and Montaigne's *Essays* and Rousseau's *Social Contract*—which sent me asleep and roused the Mount Street table to laughter and wounding witty advice to be sure and get out Kant for my next night-cap, the *Critique of Pure Reason* being specially recommended for this purpose—and Sir Walter Scott from the shelves where I found a work on the Earth by Elsée Reclus with flaming nebulae and strange monsters unknown to Genesis crawling a million years

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before. There too I read Kropotkin's *Autobiography* and Newman's *Essays* and Karl Marx in chunks and Wolfe Tone whole and histories of the Church and travels and poetry and Irish history and many a current book, gay and solemn and nondescript and half-understood from the glass-case on the counter, and sometimes the assistants looked startled at the books I asked for, especially when after reading *Underground Russia*, I asked with eager and imperious simplicity for the work mentioned therein by Stepniak, *The Career of a Nihilist*. The assistant laughed loudly before he confessed that the National Library was short of such a book with such a title—nearly as loudly as the Corkman on the tram one day who looked over the shoulder of the man in front of him and saw that great work entitled: *Is Suicide a Sin?* Afterwards I read Stepniak in a paper-cover edition and groaned over the long chronicle of the self-tortures of hero and heroine, shocked as few books have shocked me at the first reading, and what shocked me most was that the Nihilist with whom I had borne so patiently throughout many painful pages, should after all miss the Czar when he eventually managed to point the revolver and press the trigger. It was too like Tony Weller's boy who had learned the alphabet and found it was hardly worth going through so much to learn so little. Eventually a medical student stole Stepniak from me, and he was quite welcome to it.

At that time under the roof of the National Library fermented many minds which would stir Ireland in a few short years. Even as the students swallowed and digested all the knowledge necessary to pass from the Fairy City via examinations' halls, Arthur Griffith had learned much there and Connolly's pencil had scribbled many a note from the classics of Socialism or perhaps from the musty files in the newspaper room below

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where he had gone to live and learn with Mitchel and Lalor in the red, hungry and futile year of Forty-Eight. Sheehy-Skeffington had bustled in with shining eyes glowing in his vital and bearded face, all mirth and challenge from knickerbockers to whatever badge of defiance he wore on the lapel of his coat. James Joyce and Padraic Colum and James Stephens and Thomas MacDonagh dipped and argued and brooded over the tables, and Father Dineen went on with improvements to his Dictionary and tracked down more and more melodious and repentant poets, and year and year after year the students passed out to strange cities and places ere tragedy should halt on the very steps outside. There, as I ransacked the shelves and tested the infallible memories at the counter, Crawford Neil the poet sat just beyond the glass case, never at loss for an answer as the pencilled docketts were handed to him: on such and such a shelf. Then back again to the paper and book in front of him, his fine head and wondering eyes poised until the Easter morning a stray bullet catches him in the back on the steps beyond the pillars and he falls dead. Meanwhile, he dreams and pens his poems if there are no questions to answer or no more books to be sent across to Father Dineen. A. E. lurks near the counter and whispers to a scarlet-faced librarian. Some short-sighted reader spells the words aloud as he slowly cons the pages slowly turned before him. A man with narrow, cunning eyes swears and mutters in irritation at something in that huge book he opens at the same table night after night. Dubliners with thirsty minds turn many thousand pages or scribble in a thousand note-books to a low hum of gaiety and good stories under the hissing drone of whitish-blue lights above. Father Dineen rises and goes out for good, leaving all his stacks of books behind him for reverent assistants

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to bear away smiling, all ready for him the same hour to-morrow morning. Too quickly the hours rush on under the hissing lights. Past a great clock on a bakery near Leinster Street I go on many a night after ten, the book just read scething in my brain, racked and heightened with all the fever and wonders of youth, back to the flow of Gaelic in Mount Street and the jokes of Michael and Sean and Seamus. Perhaps I overdid Brother Walsh's advice as I read not only both sides but all sides. Then as now I had an almost physical love of books and could have watched the shelves and bindings and titles with sheer delight, unperturbed that I could never hope to read them all.

Sometimes in Ponsonby's bookshop fronting the Trinity walls and railings I saw the sad face of John Dillon, thick eyebrows, sorrow-shaded eyes and perky beard worshipping some tight-held tome. From these shelves at Grafton Street corner, and those of Hanna and Neale's across the tram-lines in Nassau Street, citron rows of French novels gleamed tantalisingly at me. The shadow of ignorance was only slowly lifting, and whole sentences remained in half-line obscurity as I wrestled with Erckmann-Chatrain or Pascal or Mignet in the National Library or hammered some Zola I had picked up on the quays with the dictionary and guess, held by the sincerity and rushing rhetoric hewn out of the foreign stone but feeling for all my pains as if I had dined on heavy plum-cake unwisely. Pascal's *Letters to a Provincial* I read in English and sided with the Jesuits since it seemed to me that they were decidedly the weaker side in that debate, and that Pascal favoured those verbose saints' lives more than the those unhappy Fathers addressed with such cutting wit and force of argument. Pascal recalled my uncle, since evidently both Pascal and he had revelled in Euclid for their

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childish reading, and my uncle had praised Pascal's *Thoughts* as something to be read when I found it, which I did on the quays, for fourpence, in splendid condition, and placed it uncut on the same shelf with Carlyle for my eighteenth year when I should read and understand everything. Tolstoy in his tales and in *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection* and *My Confession* I read and reread, and the *Autobiography* of John Stuart Mill for its mention in the last. Upton Sinclair's *Jungle* kept me awake until a very ghastly dawn and Zola's *Rome* and *Paris* to more pleasant dawns, but his *Lourdes* sent me into golden slumbers after twenty pages until I awoke in a smoking bed with the candle blazing on my pillow. I rescued *Lourdes* all waxed and singed at the corners and put out the beginnings of a promising fire and turned back to my golden dreams. In the morning my Aunt Bridget came in and thanked Heaven that we had not all gone there in the night. Since then I have never fallen asleep over the many books I have read in bed and never completed the pilgrimage to Lourdes with Emile though I have been there with his friend Huysmans and given Emile several opportunities. Thanks to the accursed Intermediate at this time French to me had no melody but was a series of letters to be held by my memory and dodged by my tongue.

About this time I came upon Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, which soon joined Pascal and Carlyle on the waiting shelf, and several supplementary volumes by the Professor's faithful and eloquent ex-Franciscan disciple, Mr. Joseph McCabe, whose autobiographical *Twelve Years in a Monastery* much delighted me although an odd phrase about the Irish jarred me and a certain lack of imagination for all the personal pilgrimage it chronicled. Particularly, the footnotes annoyed me. They seemed to ring less true with every edition the



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further Mr. McCabe receded in time from the atmosphere so sincerely described in his first edition. But something about this Rationalist propaganda attracted me at the time if only as a haven from clericalism and the more strident expressions of Catholicism. Through this mood, I discovered with surprise, many Dubliners passed, outliving the phase and loving the Church a little better from having stood apart from its ranks, in thought at least, for a while.

These tomes of the Rationalist Press Association in pale blue with portraits of Renan and Herbert Spencer and Darwin on the covers led to a little comedy in the Dublin I knew. A grey-faced man with a squint and an aggressive whining argumentativeness which stirred all the slumbering Catholic bigotry in me to sarcastic contradiction told me that he had read Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution* and Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God*, and these had finished him with "Catholic Ireland and the pot-bellied Bishops and clergy." Never was there so firm a believer in priestcraft as the little grey man with the squint. He blamed the clergy for dirty streets and low wages and bad weather and everything else he could think of. The activities of a Vigilance Association outside several newsagents' shops enraged him exceedingly. These equally frothy, grey-faced and squinting patrols had been inspired by his friends the clergy, lean and portly, to picket these newsagents in the interests not so much of morals, though of that the talk was loudest, but of faith and anti-Socialism. Behind the counter of one of these shops watched the mother of the proprietor, much perplexed. The good woman went to Mass every morning and never read the literature she sold over the counter, and she sold the *Freethinker* and the *Freeman's Journal* and *Sacred Heart Messenger* and *Police Budget* and *Socialist* and *Snappy*

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*Bits* without ever reading any of them, prayer-books and Socialist pamphlets and lives of saints and ballad sheets all in the way of business. After long scorning and defiance of the pickets who had attracted custom and counter-pickets, one day she drew the little man with the grey face and the squint aside and told him in a horrified whisper that she had heard another man known to him tell some one in her shop the night before that there was no God. The little man told her that he knew there was no God and hundreds of people in the city of Dublin knew there was no God, all decent people who bought papers, and if she would read Mr. Clodd and Mr. Grant Allen herself she would learn there was no God. She blessed herself again and went on selling the *Freethinker* and *Sacred Heart Messenger* and *Snappy Bits*, sometimes handing the little grey man a new saint's life and always mentioning him in her prayers, which was more than she ever did for the pickets at which she scowled so severely, saying they had the minds of cesspools and wanted something to do when they spent so much time trying to ruin the livelihood of decent and God-fearing people. In the end the little grey man gave up trying to get her to read Mr. Clodd and Mr. Grant Allen. He confided to me that he knew several who had read all the pale-blue books and shrugged their shoulders and talked the head off him and enriched the Catholic Truth Society with the libraries they hurled at him, and raised their hats as they passed the churches and then went inside and got married, and their wives wouldn't have the pale-blue books in the house at all and that was the way the pot-bellied devourers of port wine and bacon were ruining the mind of the country instead of admitting the game was up. Except the man who wouldn't go into a church at all and made the mot go to a registry office to save her good name and the priest had called

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round to try and get the man's employer to dismiss him, but the employer had told the priest to mind his own business and go to the devil, Mr. Clodd and Mr. Grant Allen had demolished. Then the little grey man cursed the Vigilance Committees, saying they were all reformed porter sharks and sour old maids the God that never existed outside the dream-haunted brains of savages had mercifully planked on the shelf. Many a Dubliner who refused to bow down to the little man's pale-blue idols and still believed in God and the Saints vigorously applauded this last dogma and called down the fire of Heaven upon another public-spirited gentleman who divided his leisure between championing the slums and upholding purity by plastering cinema-screens with eggs and the shop windows with bricks whenever film vamps gave too overpowering hints to the young persons of Dublin or Venus of Milo or some other shameless exhibition imperilled the chastity of Grafton Street and offended his very inflammable eyes.

Despite all his efforts another dark tread mingled with my Mount Street dreams and journeys among books: the whore-prowled streets and a drab and mournful procession which flaunted itself, bespeckled with red and khaki from O'Connell Street nightly down the lanes and canal banks to the shebeens and brothels behind Amiens Street station with waving shawls and paint-scarred faces and beer-stinking, snuffling, wheedling, obscene voices, a litany of blasphemy and filth soon caught by the ears and soon sounding from the barefooted newsboys' merry tongues. Between the slums and the garrison whoredom ate like a cancer across the very vitals of the capital and a wind of syphilis blew from night town through the most stately squares and streets to the cries of harlots pouncing on their sodden prey or screaming in the pubs or vanishing under the canal trees or into some cab

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twice-circling St. Stephen's Green. When Dublin became a free capital again she turned and swept her streets clean of mud and harlots, and youth was no longer darkened by that mournful, pox-eaten, howling army of harpies befouling all its dawning dreams. This army of night town was parasitic on the Army of Occupation and sprang from the muck-heaps before the crumbling mansions where abandoned, ill-fed and hopeless rotted in mind and body the poor of Dublin, 20,000 families in one room apiece with a death-rate higher than Moscow under the Czars or Calcutta swept by plague and cholera, few dreams to sweeten dry bread and rank tea and meatless boards. Sometimes a mournful flower rose with an austere bloom from this noisome soil like the working-man, Matt Talbot, that Merrion Square has since erected into a saint to save the Irish from Red Stars in the East. In his youth Matt Talbot drank the very boots off his feet but saw a great light in a Dublin pub one day and passed the rest of his life in penance and prayer, a rusting cart-chain wound into his flesh, a plank for bed in his tenement and all his scanty savings for missions and pious works. All unsuspected he walked through the wars and revolutions of Dublin until he dropped dead one day in 1923 on his way to Mass at the age of sixty-eight. And as he went on his pilgrimage, Sean O'Casey found in John Mitchel and Shakespeare picked up on the quayside barrows words to voice the all-surrounding greyness and semi-starvation and woe. Again here James Joyce passed and looked and remembered and painted the truth a more prosperous and sleeker Dublin would like to forget. Perhaps Matt Talbot's more outspoken and human workmates classed him with that universal and pathological nuisance in Dublin: the pious man with a kink about music-halls and lurid oaths. After his remarkable life had been

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made famous through the efforts of Sir Joseph Glynn in a well-known biography, Dublin awoke with a start. The officials of an organisation with which Matt Talbot had been connected during his unobtrusive life were urged to search their records. The search was made and nothing more emerged to help Devil's Advocate or Matt Talbot's canonisation beyond a story which proved that even this obscure and humble citizen had not escaped the Dublin lack of veneration. He had died of valvular disease of the heart after a lifetime as a labouring man in a carters' yard. Outwardly he looked quite healthy. The records showed that his friends had pressed the organisation to relieve him, but on inquiry an official declared that this was not a deserving case. Indignant protests led to a committee meeting and the official was summoned to defend his report. He ended his defence with a stolid shake of the head: "Well, as you have asked my opinion as to what sort this fellow Talbot is, I may as well let you have it straight. It is my opinion, confirmed by long experience of my work, that the fellow is nothing more nor less than a registered bowsie!" Bowsie is a shattering Dublin word, but the official was overborne and Matt Talbot received the help which sustained him until he died, working and praying and fasting to the end. Beside his plank bed rested a trunkful of mystic and devotional tomes, Faber and Newman and St. Francis de Sales, many lives of saints verbose and marvellous, well thumbed and each page conned with a prayer to the Holy Ghost for guidance. These mournful flowers are not uncommon in the Dublin slums and churches. I have known similar grey-faced and praying men, noble and over-scrupulous in their lives, betimes modest and self-sacrificing, but none have had the ornaments of cart-chain and plank-bed to romanticise them. Some

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shuddered at Socialism. Others loving Ireland fled from Sinn Fein at the frown of the Hierarchy. None had the maggot of religious mania in brains. Had Matt Talbot?

He needs at least to be saved from his popularisers. When the smug and prosperous Dubliner of to-day wants to be smuggler than usual he calls upon Matt Talbot in the skies to save him from the barbarians without and the Abbey Theatre and the half-hundred Communists within. This type of Dubliner, blind to all the mistakes which have helped to send up his city in flames and turmoil twice in twenty years, thinks a worker in chains would be an admirable patron for the Labour organisations. As any hint of sectarianism is the one thing calculated to infuriate the overwhelmingly Catholic membership of the present Labour unions the good Dubliner has always been disappointed. But he will continue to refuse to see the thing under his eyes: the real Christianity of the vast mass of the Irish people. He will continue to raise his eyes to Heaven when a long procession of Dublin working-men follows the coffin of a professed unbeliever to his grave in homage to his service to Labour in his lifetime, carefully raising a hundred caps as they pass the Dublin churches. He will applaud some Bishop dubbing Tone a cut-throat. He will continue to scream that Sean O'Casey should above all remember the edifying life of Matt Talbot.

This appeal to Sean O'Casey is made regularly and it is the grimmest joke that ever came out of Dublin. Even while Matt Talbot made his pilgrimage through his trunk of good books, bound tight in his scruples and cart-chain, Sean O'Casey had begun a pilgrimage through chains and books and drab places lighted with a dream. Once Seamus and I left Mount Street and found ourselves in a Drumcondra Sinn Fein club. Two strange figures remain among the memories of the night.

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Madame de Marcievicz sat in the middle of the room, pensive and beautiful with a costly lace collar draping her shoulders, ready to explode into the most unconvincingly blood-thirsty sentiments as the lecture and debate developed, but speaking with a gentle charm to any one who approached her in private. She was, although her fury expressed in such polite accents had a comic aspect, a very courageous woman, for she had broken with all her friends and immediate circle to champion an obscure movement. She protested that this was only a small atonement for her ancestors' sins in plundering the Irish people. On the back benches sat Sean O'Casey, then much swayed by memories of Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmet, and especially Shane the Proud's head spiked on Dublin Castle in the days of Good Queen Bess, this last event in those days a burning personal grief of his; it jostled bitter phrases from Mitchel and Lalor's most urgent calls to revolt on the eve of Forty-Eight in all Sean's speeches.

Sean O'Casey sits in silence at the back of the hall during the lecture, a dour and fiery figure swathed in labourer's garb, for he works on the railways just then. His neck and throat are bound in the coils of a thick white muffler, and he looks a Jacobin of Jacobins as his small, sharp and red-rimmed eyes stab all the beauty and sorrow of the world. He speaks first, and very fluently and eloquently in Irish, then launches out into a violent Republican oration in English, stark and forceful, Biblical in diction with gorgeous tints of rhetoric and bursts of anti-English Nationalism of the most uncompromising style. He will have none of the Socialists who have turned in to heckle the lecturer and he rends them savagely and brushes their materialism aside. Yes, he reminds them, when roused by his sharp words they murmur interruptions taunting him with the poverty

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and degradation of the Dublin workers, there is all that in life. Half to himself he speaks, lowering his voice to an intense whisper, but there is something else: joy. He speaks the word, and his tone gives a meaning to it even as he sinks down into silence on the bench, his fierce small head an angry star over all the others in the rear. Walter Carpenter rises and would argue with him, serious anger a-gleam in two grey bespectacled eyes. Walter is a leading Socialist propagandist, a most humourless and self-sacrificing man who walks in from Dunleary each night from home to his meetings in the city; he has ruined his worldly prospects for his beloved Red Flag and all but lost his business on the head of it. He is to be heard at the Socialist Party of Ireland, announcing solemnly that there will be a social followed by a supper, a cold supper, comrades, and you are all earnestly invited to attend and see 'ow Socialists be'ave themselves. His voice moans a reproach and an argument to Sean O'Casey. The fierce star at the rear becomes a soaring and hissing comet: O'Casey rises in a fury and growls in Irish like a thunderstorm that he wishes no Englishman to teach him. Sean strides through the door with flames in his eyes and his fists clenched. A translation of his farewell reaches Walter, whose accents grow more and more suited to a wake. With a sob in his keen, he wails: "I 'ope some one will go out after that misguided individual who 'as rushed out eaten up with racial 'atred, and tell him for Gawd's sike, that I am not an Englishman but a Scotchman, and that I 'ad the honour to drop a tear in the grive of Charles Stewart Parnell!" Soon Sean O'Casey fell under the spell of Larkin and became as fierce a Labourist as he had been a physical-force Republican, still suspicious of the Socialists, and perhaps finding models for his Covey in his *Plough and the Stars*. The pages of Larkin's



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*Irish Worker* carried articles from his pen, all remarkable in their style and power with an independent outlook struggling through the overfine writing and exotic wordiness. Yet that night in Drumcondra who could suspect he would yet voice the darkest depths of slumland and the agony of unsuspected years of turmoil and terror? As O'Casey strode beside his pipers' band or spoke in the clubs there was a force and character about him even if you thought he was a crank, a fanatic, a man whose mind had room for only one idea at a time. In private he had a courtesy and simplicity.

But there was another dreamer who lived in regions unknown to Matt Talbot or Sean O'Casey, one who walked abroad to slay great flaming dragons and scale mighty mountains: lo! Endymion marches down Grafton Street swinging a net of groceries and a sword tucked under his arm—a furnace in his face and his teeth gnashing in indignation to the delight of the children and older wits who shout aloud taunts which bring Endymion's sword flashing from his sheath to fight the crusade he has sworn and slay all the monsters of the mind he found years before he fell into a beer vat head foremost and filled himself with dreams. Dublin christened him Endymion and Endymion he remained to his dying day; and this was spent in seclusion, for the edge of Endymion's sword in his last years had become too keen and his thrusts too true to allow him to stalk his dragons abroad any more. He was a proud figure, glaring through his eyeglass, sword tucked ready for his daily dragon, a small brown hat for helmet and his visions whistling and snarling through his teeth as he pursued his winged crocodiles and fire-breathing serpents and slew a thousand demons offering him the kingdoms of the earth. The children laughed at Endymion as he passed and the children were right. There

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were saner scalers of the clouds abroad. George Russell sailed down the street in Endymion's wake, a noble galleon obliterating the sight of a guideless cockle-boat turning madly in the spray: his wide eyes netting every shade and tint of hour, immortals nesting in his hair, statistics and seraphs locked behind his ample brow. Padraic Colum swept from a side-turning, eaglet head a-flutter. James Stephens with dark visions in his doleful eyes patrols the Green, gnome-like and jesting with the gods and mourning the hunger-gnawed city warrens. Upstairs in the Café Cairo in blue clouds and coffee fumes students and poets talk and Dubliner meets Dubliner with no hurry to go home again and the chess-boards are out. A turban gleams in Grafton Street. The ladies pass in parade with alluring robes and the latest scandal, and as they gleam and chatter a poet snarls to his learned friends beside him: "Things are bad enough without these huzzies hurling their persons in our teeth!" Critics of fashion are plenty in Dublin just now. Down Rathmines at this very hour while the poet erupts in Grafton Street, another poet dashes crusading on his side-car, a silver cross gleaming round his neck, a brown habit showing under his black coat, a sheaf of papers clasped in his hands. He reads his poems to the jarvey, to the first labouring man on a canal bridge, or to you or me, bidding us the time of day in a sonorous and friendly way; in any case as we go by the audience he fixes with his large and dramatic look. Sometimes silver cross and brown habit mount a tram-car, and there is a sudden clanging of the bell. The poet dismounts, sweeps his sombrero to the tram's rear platform and hurls a parting judgment at the modern fashions within: "I crave your pardon, ladies, I had mistaken this bathing-box for a public vehicle!" And on the nearest wall, in his flowing hand on foolscap,

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he writes that or some other message of warning, reproof or doom, and pins it firmly in place.

On the walls other messages catch the eye: the sable and yellow posters of the Abbey Theatre. Nightly on the top of the small stairs William Butler Yeats pauses and looks through the packed and quizzing pit and gallery before he descends to the stalls, solemn eyes and wispy forehead in the mists, much hated by the Gaels, and a brick from Arthur Griffith through his window every other week or so since the British Government gave him a literary pension to keep his bee in his little isle in Inisfree, and he brought Synge from Paris to Arran to belittle the great and sagacious people who still allow eighty playboys, job-hunters, traitors, West Britons, Eloquent Dempseys, weaklings, helots, Sham Squires, buffoons and four hundred pounders to represent them at Westminster. Echoes of the new speech of Synge rise from the pit which jests about Big Moons on Little Hills and Woman of the House and Dead Surely and Dividing Das to the Knobs of their Gullets and a Drift of Females in Their Shifts before Us. Darkness, and the curtain rising and there is a shout of delight as Arthur Sinclair struts down the stage in whatever comic mantle Lady Gregory so prim and silver-haired among the Olympians has provided. Unless it is a field night, and Mr. Yeats is defying the Mob and the Bourgeois with the help of the Dublin police and five hundred howling citizens, or Mr. George Bernard Shaw is defying the Censor with the aid of Fred O'Donovan and the Allgoods and Arthur Sinclair disguised this time as Elder Daniels with half the journalists of Europe and America watching from the wings when the seating gives out. Sometimes the Ulster Players on these same sacred boards satirise Mr. Yeats to his face by decking him in corduroy breeches and dress-suit with loud

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demands from Syngesque mummers for sticks from north-west corners of cupboards while a mist does be on the bog. But Lady Gregory then dresses Molière in Kiltartan and the plaintive query comes from J. A. O'Rourke as to what he is doing in that galley. Thomas MacDonagh watches the stage pensively, his head on one side, and then wakes up to talk the other poets around him under the floor, and the wits say that MacDonagh has all the ideas and the other poets listen and then express them, though Thomas writes a hundred lines on the most meagre day wherever he is. His staccato laugh and "begad!" cross the stalls and enter the ante-room with his gaily waved hand, and Thomas is soon at home with the critics and *literati*. Joseph Holloway, who knows all about the Abbey from the first stone to the last, blinks dogmatically and talks ex-cathedra. The Philistines creep out the door in the intervals and sometimes do not return from the pubs where they hear a speech as gay and glittering as Synge and Kiltartan, but no one seems to have thought it worth gathering, although Sean O'Casey's intent eye upon the stage from the pit and his ear cocked eagerly are a splendid disguise for a future exporter of gold from El Dorado. In the pit, too, are pale and dark young men who groan with anguish at *The Playboy of the Western World*, and some crusty full-throated Gaels who want to drown Yeats and his clique in a sack in the Liffey, and bitter-tongued citizens who glare at the pallid and drooping and all-unconscious Lennox Robinson growling: "Jasus, look at him! He writes bloody gloomy plays. More blood in his words than himself. Gob, he defies the force of gravitation: he'd fall slowly. Did you never hear him say: O Gawd!" Every night the Abbey is fuller and fuller, and the black and yellow posters never call in vain for a waiting queue.

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Beneath all this lurked the tangle and deep disease of Dublin. John Mitchel summed it up in one biting phrase: "O City of Dastards and Bellowing Slaves!" Down in Fownes Street, Dublin, sat the man with a pen as sharp as Mitchel and an eye upon dastards and bellowing slaves to be flayed in the columns of *Sinn Féin*. Sometimes Arthur Griffith flayed the just with the unjust. George Moore was arrested by his fierce and icy words and summed him up as a ram in mind and person because he butted England with admirable persistency in his paper week in and week out while he allowed all the poets of Rathmines to carol in his columns. But Mr. Moore failed to add that when Arthur Griffith failed to get a poet from the thirty-two counties of Ireland he wrote the paper himself so careless of fame that he disguised himself under many pen-names and so careless of money that when American journalists tried to tempt him away with lavish and certain dollars from flaying dastards and bellowing slaves, he merely pulled his tie straight and smiled shyly at them. Many Dubliners loved him and, unknown to themselves, spoke with his accents and knowledge, for that was the result of his never arguing but repeating his assertions for years and years. Sometimes a great cheer sent the roof of a Dublin hall sky-high when Arthur Griffith spoke, but that was not often, for Griffith disliked crowds and his speaking voice was low and indistinct. At the Rotunda I can see him now halted in his speech by roaring waves of applause and stormy echoes, and he stands quiet and proud and cliff-jawed. He has touched the heart of Dublin with a word as he always can at a pinch, and as it roars in response perhaps Griffith fears he is becoming an orator, and does he not scathe all orators in every issue of his paper? But after all he has only convinced the Gaelic Leaguers assembled in their

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Oireachtas with a sudden trenchant word that he withdraws some doubts and reservations about the language revival. . . . A great dark bird hovers over the spot Griffith has left, a great dark bird with loud beating wings and a rush of music in its notes that lashes seven seas to life where Griffith had roused one with a whisper: Dr. Douglas Hyde is speaking. . . . A golden-bearded man speaks, and arguments succeed the music of the dark and whirling bird, arguments profound and piercing in the accents of an Antrim glen and Eoin MacNeill steps from the platform back to his library while twenty pipers and a thunder of drums finishes with oratory for the night. . . . That evening in Mount Street while Michael and Sean discuss the great battles between the dialects of Munster and Connacht and those who have spoken Irish from the cradle and those who have not, and Joseph Clarke has come to their aid with his proud possession, that copy of Father Dincen's *Irish Dictionary*, falling to pieces he has consulted it so often, and they have laughed again at certain citizens who are always making speeches to the Gaels and bidding farewell to the English language, for this again is the last time a Dublin audience shall hear them speak in aught else but the tongue of the Gael, but though they knit their brows and extend their arms in token of an irrevocable vow it never is, while Michael and Sean discuss all this, a name escapes them and the conversation flows on, and it is forgotten: this new teacher in the Ard-Craobh with the foreign name . . . Devil . . . de Valera with his gaunt face and dark moustaches . . . Spanish ale to give us hope . . . evidently they admire and like him. . . . Round the table in Mount Street there was great talk of a new Irish-Ireland educational experiment. Soon I knew this first-hand, for I went to Saint Enda's College on its opening day and met Patrick Pearse.

## SIX

NOT since Wolfe Tone has any Irish leader left so deep a mark upon the national heart and imagination as Patrick Henry Pearse. But whenever I think of Pearse I have to make an effort to think of him as a revolutionary leader at all, just as one who knows Tone from his journals may have to make an effort to identify him with a phrase in some fulsome and flamboyant oration or again with his profile and epaulets in some yellow and dusty print. Pearse, like Tone, lives best in his more intimate writings, and like Tone, too, those who speak most of Pearse read and heed him least. To me Pearse is ever a personality, most of all, perhaps, that schoolmaster of twenty-nine years I saw on the iron steps leading down to the Study Hall on a September morning in 1908. He was wrapped in his black gown, and Cullenswood House was wrapped in a mantle of history, history fulfilled and history to be: in the library near where Pearse was standing, Lecky had turned pages in his boyhood with those trees waving beyond the windows, trees perhaps young when the Irish swept down from the mountains on Easter Monday 1209 to wipe out the Bristol colonists of Dublin; until new colonists from Bristol in 1316 hacked the O'Tooles to pieces in the Wood of Cullen and were quits for the deed which had given Easter Monday the name of Black Monday and pleasant fields the name of Bloody Fields. So much for the past, but this September morning forbodes another Easter too: Pearse and MacDonagh have come with their plans and dreams, and less than ten years after, Michael Collins and Richard

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Mulcahy will plan and hide in a small room off a white-washed passage below stairs while Pearse and MacDonagh fill a page as vivid as ever slaughtered colonist or mountain raider six hundred years before.

Pearse stood aloof on the stairhead, as sombre as his gown, a black tie showing under a somewhat Byronic collar, his high forehead rising over his fresh-coloured face, a slight cast in one of his blue eyes. This last blemish was caused by an illness in childhood, but so familiar to his pupils that it almost slips the memory: the dominant recollection of Pearse is of a handsome head well poised and a look more expressive, if anything, for the pallid, irregular pupil and all the power of the sane left eye with its shades of command, feeling and pensiveness. Outwardly he was shy, unassuming and very reserved. He read my father's letter and walked under the fanlight on the stairhead, where three coloured candles burned in stained glass with the Irish triad beneath: "Three candles which illumine every darkness: Truth, Wisdom, Knowledge." He strode forward, smiling his shy smile and talking in Irish. His voice was clear and persuasive. He always talked to his pupils in Irish, lapsing into the barest minimum of English until by twelve months his vocabulary had become the property of his young charges, and he laughed to himself as they flourished his own phrases and idioms as theirs. I looked up and saw an Old Irish inscription emblazoned round a fresco over a doorway in the hall: the boy Cuchulainn taking arms. He stands with uplifted shield and spear in the presence of the king; the Druid has warned him that those who take arms that day shall have short lives but renown undying. Pearse translated the boy's answer beneath in its half-circle of Gaelic lettering: "I care not though I live but one day and one night if only my fame and deeds live after me." Under the cold manner



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something fiery broke into the words, and my mind went back to County Meath, when I had seen Patrick Pearse for the first time. This day in Cullenswood was the first day I had found any spell in Pearse. I had promptly forgotten the man I had seen on the first occasion, and had been somewhat repelled by the touch of humourlessness and priggishness in him. Yet on that day in Meath there was the same aloofness, the same fires beneath uncovered suddenly, a faith in his deliberate and chosen words mounting from passion into poetry. Then as ever, he had been cold and apart in the beginning, clad in his greatcoat with the collar turned up, a grey Stetson hat in his gloved hands, head bent slightly on one side with his eyes intent on the ground except when he raised them with a transient toss of impetuosity. His manner of speaking was grave, slow, deliberate, and at moments almost painful in its pauses and stresses and oratorical questions and repetitions and phrases on the edge of platitude. Until the fire within reached his words and the listener was a critic no longer: Pearse soars over his listeners' heads and reaches their hearts. Oratory is an art he loves and practises with pride; he has learned much from Shakespeare and can quote from Grattan and Parnell and Augustine Birrell or Arthur Balfour or Cicero or Milton as a sign of his study of the tribunes and masters of words. In County Meath on the rain-soaked Hill of Ward, he mounts the platform in defiance of all the fierce showers which washed previous speakers to a dumb and damp retreat. As the hundreds in the sodden grass think of moving back to shelter until the excursion train is ready to return to Dublin, Pearse appears on the platform bareheaded. He waves an umbrella aside imperiously that some one would hold over him, and soon the rain-soaked audience are in the grip of that flaming sincerity which we know

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to-day moved even the judges at his court martial. Through the icy deliberation of his opening sentences this sincerity breaks into glowing and passionate words, and with uplifted head and few gestures, Pearse soars and lifts us from the sopping green and dull soil of Meath. The gathering is to commemorate the life and work of Father Eugene O'Growney, one of the most famous of the language revivalists from whose simple phonetic text-books students throughout Ireland just then first grappled with Irish, landing salmons and stools and the time of day and bread and oxen and that very Asses' bridge of Irish: the three forms of the verb "to be." Father O'Growney had died in exile, alone and ailing, a burning flame quenched in the end by that Irish plague which has quenched so many bright flames: consumption. In exile he had written to his old friend, Patrick Pearse, then editor of the Gaelic League official organ and a traveller into every Irish-speaking district in the land on foot and a-wheel, a gleaner of plant-names and bird-names and place-names, and many lists of these Father O'Growney has sent him just before death comes on the wings of the Irish plague, when the exiled priest knows he will never see Ireland again and turns to a wall in far San Francisco and weeps. Such was the tale Pearse told on the rainy day in Meath. His was the only memorable speech. He was the only speaker who held his ground against the elements, a fire undimmed by all the clouds and waters.

That old Meath scene recurred to me that September morning, for though Pearse had remained in my mind as a remarkable speaker and a flaming idealist, a prejudice lingered too: there was little fun in him, an over-austerity, a strain of goody-goodyness. I was yet to learn that he was self-critical to the point of injustice, and hear him confess that when he was young he was undoubtedly

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"a bit of a prig." And I was to discover a rich humour behind all that mask of austerity. That morning he was very quiet as he welcomed the forty boys who gathered in twos and threes on the sanded path under the beeches and elms and sycamores near the fruit trees beyond the moss-green iron pailings of the garden. Thomas MacDonagh sailed through the main gate, a bundle of books beneath his arm, a smile on his flexible mouth and mirth in his great piercing gaze. He flourished his hands in easy gestures and became friendly with the whole forty boys in ten minutes, talking thirteen to the dozen and laughing his quick staccato laugh. "Begad," he cries, and again, "listen to this, Pearse, begad!" He promises every boy the most certain and amazing progress in every subject on the programme in less than a week, having learned Italian in that time himself with the aid of a dictionary, his Latin and his days in Paris. "A soldier's life is the life for me!" he sings, and then breaks into a merry French song and comes down like a hundred of bricks on one of the boarders for a smut on his nose. He goes from group to group, summing up its knowledge and character with sudden questions and more prophecies. He drops his books on the sanded path and, as he gathers them up, commences the story of his life we eventually have continued in class-time by dint of artful leading questions or books placed on view to set him off, and once we succeed in starting Thomas MacDonagh there is no stop or halt until the class is over with MacDonagh's amazed shout of dismay: "Good heavens! There is that bell again. There is never any time to do anything." His life was never exhausted by us, for there were long digressions on everything under the sun. Sometimes Thomas had an uneasy conscience that he should stick more to the programme and refuse to be led on. Then he would shake his head at his class and smile and confess

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that he ought to be ashamed of himself to talk so much, but he had never had such an interesting audience, and what harm if he talked about history when he was nominally teaching Irish, and French when he should be at Latin, and Irish when he should be grinding away at mathematics and politics and Dublin gossip in the hours due to English; it was all knowledge anyway, and the great thing was to enlarge one's culture. But his talk was not idle talk and his instalments of his life-story were in much demand: how he had tried to join the French Army and found too late there were three vacancies per annum for Irishmen in the Austrian Army ever since some great battle in the days of the Wild Geese; how he had nearly been a priest; how he had been the greatest West Britisher in Ireland and suppressed the Irish language and played Rugby football in a South of Ireland College; how he was very properly held up to popular odium for this in a Dublin paper and saw the light, learning Irish in some quick flashes of time, all as a matter of course; and all his friends, from Padraic Colum, who was mad on Arabs and Arabian civilisation and liable to be found dead in a ditch devoid of MacDonagh's guidance so much in the air lived that gentle lover of deserts, caravans, coffee and the Koran, to Canon O'Leary, who offered all his visitors a bowl of milk and bowed them out if interrupted during his Irish masterpieces. But behind all MacDonagh's talk and fussiness there was an inspiration and power of stimulation.

At last we pass into the main classroom where in Gaelic lettering names of heroes, saints and sages circle the wainscoting: Brian of the Tribute, Owen Roe, Sarsfield, Tone, Colmcille, Patrick, Keating, John MacHale, Thomas Davis. Over the mantelpiece hangs a picture of the Christ-Child. Pearse mounts the

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rostrum, while at his side Thomas MacDonagh listens, grave and lost in his thoughts all of a sudden. Pearse speaks at once in Irish, swaying slightly and turning his head sideways in a mannerism peculiar to him. Something in the tone of the man unknown to most of us, and the language still strange to all except some half-dozen native speakers grips us, for the expressionless face kindles and a force and a fire comes into the cold voice. He is still aloof from us, but the spell works, and as he turns to English we become conscious of it. There is a solemnity yet which chills us, something more akin to the monk than the preacher of war we and the world are to know later. To-day, Pearse is more preacher than warrior. A smile crosses MacDonagh's face, and his face grows thoughtful once more: "Begad, what a missionary was lost in Pearse!" The silence deepens as Pearse outlines the school programme with that trick of short, effective repetition of simple phrases, and ends with only one flash of the fire fated to burn him up in eight short years from the day we hear him speak. It is Pearse the Headmaster and scholar and Irish-Ireland idealist who speaks. In Cullenswood he only once spoke to us as a convinced revolutionary, and then to his senior students in an aside during an English class: no nation in history had ever won independence without fighting for it, except Norway, which had been prepared to fight. For the rest, during the years at Cullenswood House, Pearse might have been labelled by us as a staunch supporter of Mr. Redmond, for whenever he spoke of Sinn Féin it was very critically and often sharply, if some disparaging propaganda of Mr. Griffith against members of Mr. Redmond's party came to his notice. But in these first years we heard most Pearse, the Irish language revivalist. Pearse, in one of the severe personal judgments of himself he

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would make in confidence from time to time, described himself as being for long after the opening of St. Enda's and indeed until six months before his death, "a harmless literary Nationalist and not a dangerous man." In this judgment he was a true extremist, because long before that those of his senior pupils who knew him well were wont to joke about the small chance and opportunity needed to make Pearse head a revolt. But on the rostrum that day and many days after his one immediate aim was to make us Irish-speaking and restore an Irish-speaking Ireland by a reform of education. We heard nothing of Tone or Emmet as competitors with Cuchulainn and Colmcille. It was into the hero-world of the sagas he led us this very morning when he commenced to tell us the story of Cuchulainn. The very name of the school was taken from Saint Enda of Aran, a prince who left all the honours and armies of the world and love itself to spend his days in solitude and prayer with a company of monks on a lonely island in the Atlantic.

The lover of Saint Enda left him to found a convent, and he, bowing to the will of Heaven, founded his monastery. In these years at Cullenswood a treacherous wave off the Kerry coast swallowed the woman Pearse loved, the tragedy he enshrines in one line of his poem:

*In love I found but grief that withered my life.*

This was the first shadow which darkened Cullenswood House. At the funeral I remember Pearse with his grief-stricken face dressed in black and wearing a tall hat, with his mother beside him. He looked terribly moved, but few of the mourners at the funeral knew that this death which had stirred the public mind deeply meant more to Pearse than the loss of an esteemed colleague in the language movement. Members of his own family were equally ignorant, but Pearse's nephew,

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Alfred MacGloughlin, told me of the scene with Pearse after this funeral, when Pearse had shaken his head and repeated again and again: "Terrible, too terrible!" with the look I had seen in the ranks of the mourners.

It is indeed to Pearse's writings we must go to find autobiography in half-lines and odd asides and unconscious portraits. In his poems, stories, plays, speeches and pamphlets he has told the truth about his life and motives so well that no one will ever do it better. The greatest Irishmen have suffered in their biographers, who, when not rich in rhetoric and lean in facts, have degenerated into the worst kind of apologists and obtruded the catch-cries and cant of the hour for the words and life of a Mitchel or a Grattan. Wolfe Tone, too, has suffered, but in the main escaped by writing his biography himself so well that no one else can ever surpass or eclipse him at that business. Pearse will escape that fate in any case, because he too had not only unconsciously but consciously taken Tone's precaution. Moreover, he left behind him in the memory of his contemporaries a figure so gracious and human that it already has woven itself into the tenacious and undying tradition of Ireland. Even that thing we have to make an effort to recatch to-day, soured and saddened by bitter Civil War disillusion, the passage of time and the vixen bark of pietistic political hypocrites, the spirit of Pearse's day and all the early idealism of him and his associates has been revived by a miracle in the ardent and graceful pages of Louis N. Le Roux's *Vie de Patrice Pearse*.<sup>1</sup> To read his Breton critic and biographer is to relive the spirit of Pearse and his time.

The 1916 Insurrection cut short the greatest work of Pearse. At his final revision of his writings, he had to

<sup>1</sup> Rennes, 1931. English translation by Desmond Ryan, Dublin, 1932.

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leave unfinished an autobiography wherein he sketched his own character, youth and early aspirations, adding a warning that he had mixed some poetry with the truth. His consideration for the feelings of others led him to make this autobiographical fragment a sealed book during the lifetimes of several mentioned in it, although beyond a few revelatory asides, the book stopped short about his tenth year. Pearse's relatives took his last injunction very literally, and the fragment has never been published. He had said the book was not to be published without permission during the lifetimes of three relatives mentioned—a very scrupulous reservation, since nothing in these references could have offended. Pearse's remark, that there was more poetry than truth in this autobiography, proves that he never intended it to be taken too seriously. Fortunately, Pearse had already written his real spiritual autobiography in his play *The Singer*, and fortunately, too, his youth can be reconstructed from other sources. Early portraits show him as a pensive and brooding child. He himself attributed his own deep and fiery love of Ireland and his Gaelicism to his mother's people, the Bradys, with memories of pikes and gibbets in the Meath of Ninety-Eight. In his *Songs of the Irish Rebels*, he tells us of the old aunt, "the woman to whom I owe all my enthusiasms," and adds in *The Story of a Success*: "It is a long time since I was attracted by the Gaelic plan of educating children. One of my oldest recollections is that of a kindly grey-haired *seanchaidhe* (story-teller), a woman of my mother's people, telling tales by the kitchen fire-place. She spoke more wisely and nobly of ancient and heroic things than any one else I have ever known. Her only object was to amuse me, yet she was the truest of all my teachers. One of her tales was of a king, the most famous king of his time in Ireland, who had gathered about him a number of boys,



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the children of his friends and kinsmen, whom he organised into a little society, giving them a constitution and allowing them to make their own laws and elect their own leaders. The most renowned of the king's heroes were appointed to teach them chivalry, the most skilled of his men of art to teach them arts, the wisest of his druids to teach them philosophy. The king himself was one of their teachers, and so did he love their companionship that he devoted one-third of all the time he saved from affairs of State to teaching them or watching them at play; and if any stranger came to the dun during that time, even though he were a king's envoy demanding audience, there was but one answer to him: 'the king is with his foster-children.' This was my first glimpse of the Boy-Corps of Eamhain-Macha, and the picture has remained in my heart. In truth, I think that the old Irish plan of education, as idealised for boys in the Macradh of Eamhain and for girls in that of the Grianan of Lusga, was the wisest and most generous that the world has ever known." This wise old woman with her fire-side tales thus gave Pearse the inspiration on which he afterwards founded St. Enda's College, but she gave him more than that: his first words of Irish, many an old Irish tale, legend, ballad, Ossianic lay and his life-long heroes too: Wolfe Tone, O'Donovan Rossa and Napoleon. Often Pearse, the Headmaster, recited the *Old Grey Mare* to his pupils in after years, an old ballad he had heard at the fire-side and partly rewritten:

*At break of day I chanced to stray  
All by the Seine's fair side,  
When to ease my heart young Bonaparte  
Came forward for to ride.  
On a field of green with gallant mien  
He formed his men in square  
And down the line with look so fine  
He rode his Old Grey Mare. . . .*

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The story of Pearse's life is brief: he lived and died to realise his three wishes: to edit a bilingual newspaper, to found a bilingual secondary school, and to die as leader of a revolution to establish an Irish Republic. In between he wrote some of the best poems, short stories and plays in modern Irish, educationalist essays, heroic plays and propaganda pamphlets in English. He was born 10th November 1879, at 22 Great Brunswick Street—since renamed Pearse Street—Dublin, where his father, James Pearse, had settled as a sculptor. James Pearse was a Devonshire man, impulsive and devoted to the arts, an advanced Radical and a friend of Charles Bradlaugh. His work in stone and marble is scattered over the Dublin churches. He could use his pen as well as his chisel, and the chief occasion he used his pen had a certain historic irony about it. One day in 1886, at the height of the Home Rule struggle, James Pearse saw a sixpenny pamphlet, *England's Duty to Ireland*, written by Dr. Thomas Maguire of Trinity, a Catholic professor with an alphabet of degrees and distinctions and very rabid Unionist views. The opening lines of the pamphlet infuriated James Pearse: "Most people will admit at the first blush that Ireland is less civilised than England." He read on to the end: "I repeat that there is no nostrum for the Irish difficulty; the remedies are the constant enforcement of the law and the promotion of education." Maguire followed the old familiar path of Spenser and the Ascendancy historians with the added bitterness characteristic of all of Irish blood who take this path. Maguire, of course, called the Irish dirty and the clergy a pack of rebels or abettors of rebels for not keeping their filthy flocks so stupefied with fasts and prayers and noses in the dust before all the Papist Mumbo-Jumbos that agitators would go out of business, and promised an Ulster invasion in the advent of Home

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Rule that would be remembered when the massacres of Cromwell were as shadowy memories as Conn and Brian Boru. In all simplicity, the good Doctor admitted that there was one good thing in Ireland, but only one: Trinity College. It is worth turning over these dead and malignant pages to-day if only to be awed by the ironic comment of history on the argument which the Doctor started, James Pearse continued, and his son went far to clinch once and for all. "Ulster" rose in due course and the Devonshire man's son died to dot all the "i's" and cross all the "t's" of his father's pamphlet, *England's Duty to Ireland as it Appears to an Englishman*. This booklet is also worth reading to-day if only to find something of Pearse's polemical humour and eloquence in his father's writings. In its day the pamphlet went through many editions and was widely quoted from the pulpit and in the Press. James Pearse had amazed his family circle by the strong language he used as he turned page after page of Doctor Maguire, exclaiming: "I'll teach the bloody fellow a lesson. He ought to rinse out his mouth." Sometimes with a smile Pearse told inquirers that his father was a quiet, artistic Englishman. But in hours of depression Pearse went to his father's bookcases, full of histories of art, philosophy and the lives of great thinkers and doers. He used to take down the pamphlet bound in green cloth, read the closing lines and say with affectionate humour: "For an Englishman, he was not too bad!" There is a flash of Patrick Pearse in the opening lines of James Pearse's pamphlet: "In endeavouring to reply to this most extraordinary ebullition of quasi-religious-political fireworks, I shall endeavour not to follow the very bad example set by my opponent, the doctor of much learning and many adjuncts, of dressing up those with whom I disagree in the most shocking and degrading language which the

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English tongue can furnish." And these are James Pearse's closing words:

"I say to the Government, and I say it with as loyal a heart as any Maguire that ever spoke, that England has no moral right to rule this country, except the result of that rule be the contentment, the prosperity and the real union which can only result from the willing obedience to the laws which are made by a free and satisfied people. Let this be done and we may reasonably expect that strife and bitterness may depart from the land in spite of all the professors and owls who hoot and screech from the walls of old Trinity."

Sometimes Pearse's mother drew a picture of Patrick Pearse about the time his father was engaged in these polemics. She often told this story, her merry eyes a-gleam behind her gold-rimmed spectacles and her black-white hair nodding above her pleasant fresh-coloured features. As an infant Pearse used to mount a chair, waving a green flag and chanting loudly at the top of his voice:

*Home Rule and Liberty, that is our demand,  
Nothing else will satisfy the people of our land!*

Another story she told has become famous for its hint of the future, and this story I heard William Pearse tell in his brother's presence in 1915. We were having tea in the small cottage in Rosmuck, County Galway, whither Pearse retired once or twice a year to the Connacht of the bogs and lakes he loved. Outside rain fell and the Atlantic roared a mile away. It was a stirring month for all the quiet of the granite hills and peat around us, the month of the home-coming of O'Donovan Rossa, and Pearse sat at the table turning in his mind the phrases he would speak at the dead Fenian's funeral, and Willie laughed shyly as he told the

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tale: as an infant he had knelt down at his bedside at Pat's command and they had both taken an oath to live for Ireland and die for Ireland when they grew up. Pearse smiled as Willie was half-way through the story, and the pair of them then laughed loudly together: when their mother returned they had told her of the oath they had taken, and she often repeated the story in the years to come, less and less humorously as the years lifted it from a childish prank to something solemn, whose telling could only be marked with tears.

Pearse's youth was introspective and studious, a thing more of dreams and books than games, and all his books were worn, scored and annotated. When he was twelve he began the study of Irish in the quaint texts and grammars of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language. Thomas MacDonagh used to tell of an early meeting of Pearse and Canon Peter O'Leary in a back room in Dame Street, and, according to MacDonagh, this was Pearse's first contact with the Gaelic League. Canon O'Leary showed Pearse his famous folk-novel *Seadna*, and they read a few pages. Years before this remarkable man had had the whole course of his life changed by a direct question from a man equally remarkable: Archbishop MacHale, who spoke at a prize day at Maynooth College. Canon O'Leary had won a high place in the lists for his knowledge of ancient tongues, and then the Archbishop, who loved the Irish language and translated Moore and Homer into Irish, asked the brilliant young men when they would ever awake to the treasures of the Irish language then already condemned as a vulgar dialect and doomed to death with ridicule and the call of America and tallies round children's necks and a crack of a rod when a word of Irish was spoken. From this question sprang Canon O'Leary's remarkable series of works, and he went to the living speech of

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Munster with a superb defiance of pedants and scholars, and spelled as he liked and wrote Æsop and an historical novel, and retold the old stories from the sagas and all the life of Munster as folk on the roads and round the fire-sides could understand them, and not a few cranky scholars dithering up in Dublin and patronising Erse and Celtic and never using eyes or ears outside a dusty library. Pearse's glance at *Seadna* gave him the hint he needed: there was a living speech which told of devils' pacts and horse fairs and fairy music and Seadna the shoemaker as happy as Faust on the heavenly hills in the heel of the hunt, brushing whole armies of Handy Andys, whole herds of Irish bulls, forests of blackthorns, legions of peasants lispig begorrahs on to the back shelves of libraries to be choked with dust. But Pearse found his spiritual home in the West and he had a deeper sense of literary values than any one else in the language movement. He became one of its most effective propagandists as an orator and writer. He reformed the whole system of teaching Irish after a close study of bilingualism in Belgium and Wales. As an educationalist, he stood alone. Before he was eighteen he had gained an amazing knowledge of the Irish language and literature—as his booklet published at that age, *Three Essays on Gaelic Topics*, is one bewildering proof—and been elected on the Executive of the Gaelic League. Before he was twenty-four he had graduated in the Royal University, won his B.L. degree, of which he was heartily ashamed, and looked half-angry and half-ashamed if appealed to on a point of law, gained a scholarship in modern languages, been appointed Irish lecturer in the Catholic University College, editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis* (the Gaelic League official organ, *The Sword of Light*), and secretary of the Gaelic League Publication Committee.

It was these years in the Gaelic League which left

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Pearse the greatest but also the bitterest recollections of his life. The only approach to personal resentment and bitterness I ever remarked in him was when he sometimes referred to old feuds of those days: pedantic criticisms of his books and the attempts of cliques to prevent their publication, attacks on him as a moderate, and some crusty personalities with whom he clashed. But when all that was said, these years were the years of his youth, and of his youth he has sung in his poem that he had wasted the glorious years, and had he the years he would waste them over again. Sometimes he would talk of more early memories, of his own school-days when he was a most model boy, except on one awful occasion when his schoolmaster had to gasp: "And you, too, Patrick!" For an angry old gentleman had identified Patrick Pearse as one of the young ruffians who had taken part in the boisterous sport of "blocking old fellows," that is bawling nicknames and knocking off high hats. Dismissed with a stupefied shake of the head, Patrick Pearse, crimson, went back to his well-thumbed books and foreswore such sports for the future. Or a more pleasing recollection: himself, a small boy, trudging and pushing with pride through the crowds in the Dublin streets, a penny in his hand, trying in vain to buy an evening paper with news of the result of a Home Rule division. Or the resentment he felt when he heard one of his teachers say in class: "So Parnell's dead, the dirty fellow!" And even in the fierce struggles of after years a memory of this time remained: John Redmond was his chief political enemy, but he could never forget that Redmond had stood by Parnell in the last crisis of all.

Eight years filled the life of Patrick Pearse from the day we heard him speak in Cullenswood House. A formal chronicle would run: St. Enda's College transferred to the Hermitage, Rathfarnham, 1910; Dublin  
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Passion Play, Easter 1911; *An Barr Buadh* (The Trumpet of Victory), 1912; *From a Hermitage* articles in *Irish Freedom*, the organ of the Irish Republican Brotherhood which he joins the same year, 1913; speech on foundation of Irish Volunteers, November 1913, and becomes member of their Provisional Committee and Director of Organisation; visits America and meets John Devoy, spring 1914; O'Donovan Rossa Oration, 1915; *An Mhathair agus sgealta eile* (The Mother and other stories), Heads' Insurrection, Execution, May 1916.

But these eight years for me are dominated by something more human and living than a chronicle or a phrase or the latest facile legend of some partisan who burns all Pearse adored.



## SEVEN



IN the autumn of 1910 St. Enda's College was transferred to the Hermitage, Rathfarnham. For some time I continued to cycle out there every day and back to Sandymount, where we had returned, and the Mount Street table was broken up. The most important thing that had happened in those two years to me was that the Irish language no longer remained hidden behind the beautiful type and I had wandered in the folk-world of Canon O'Leary and read in the original the stories I had heard long before under a London roof from Padraic O'Conaire. Once or twice I had crossed the seas and talked to my grandmother in 306 Camberwell New Road, and given her all the news of the city she still remained a citizen of at heart. Sometimes these journeys were sad journeys, as that when I returned to my grandfather's funeral and saw my grandmother's stricken look and knew my grandfather would never again mount the four flights in the mornings and fix the great clock over the Green with his telescope and read his books under the white globe. My uncle had vanished like a very poet and we never heard of him again. He had left some manuscripts of his poems behind. His solitary book of poems had just been published when he wandered off to death or some far American city, or for all I know to end his days in a monastery. At Dublin street corners sometimes Padraic O'Conaire would ask of news of him, and tell a strange tale: my uncle was away teaching English to the Queen of Spain's children; no, I must not laugh, such and such a man in Geneva or Paris had told Padraic

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O'Conaire so as a fact. Then Padraic went back to yarns as glorious and fact-free as of old in the London room, including a remarkable journey of his own across Russia to meet Tolstoy, with whom he had held a long conversation, and Tolstoy had said that only one man had ever understood Tolstoy and that man was Padraic O'Conaire.

Suddenly there came a great change in my life and I nearly went back to London. My father's long struggle with his paper came to an end and he closed it down and returned to Fleet Street. Two men in Dublin decided that I ought to remain in Dublin. One was Jim Larkin, who offered my father to take me into his office. The second was Patrick Pearse, who asked me to come on to his staff and eventually act as his secretary. This second offer revealed a new side of Pearse to me as he made it. He came into a *Freedom* club lecture one evening and sat beside me. He said he had heard that my father had closed down his paper. Would I like to stay behind and teach in St. Enda's? He would think over it and write to my father later. Pearse sank back on the bench and whispered several comments on the lecture. At this time he had no formal connection with the revolutionary movement and was regarded with disfavour by the apostles of Mitchel and Tone since he had advocated acceptance of the Irish Council Bill. But he often visited any clubroom where there was a lecture on Emmet or Tone or a patriotic celebration. In private he was very caustic about the official revolutionaries, saying they were no use for anything else but talking. The Boer War proved it. If the Irish had meant half their fiery speeches they could have done something more than cheering Boer victories and risen in arms and chased the small British garrison of youths and Militiamen out of Ireland. Discipline, military discipline, was

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needed for that. Otherwise, we had only rioting mobs a few policemen could disperse, while a few hysterical women made speeches, and a few old Fenians gathered over rooms in public houses and talked of old times. Whatever he had heard of the semi-moribund Irish Republican Brotherhood inspired him with profound distrust of that body, and he even advised several supporters of his to have nothing to do with it. But at this time he had definitely determined to inspire and lead a new revolutionary movement himself. This night was the first night I realised this. He sat apart, eager, silent and interested, his Stetson hat clasped in his hands and his greatcoat collar turned up. The lecture was on some historical subject by an expert, and Pearse disagreed in whispers to me at points here and there. At the close, Pearse challenged some statements and spoke with great force and deliberation, quoting Irish poetry profusely to prove that there was a separatist tradition which bridged the centuries, an argument familiar to all who know his last four political pamphlets. So far Pearse and the audience were at one, but when Pearse turned from the past to the present and criticised several speakers for their gibes at the Redmondites and asked where all this talk led, there was a change of temper. There were some sharp exchanges, and Pearse's plea for a charitable attitude towards the Irish Parliamentary Party drew taunts that he was a moderate very boorishly and ignorantly expressed with all the crudity of exasperated doctrinaires. Pearse made a remarkable reply which ended: "Yes, give me a hundred men and I will free Ireland!" This daring simplicity was very characteristic, and the personality behind it banished any suggestion of bombast or the ridiculous. The faith behind his words silenced the critics and commanded respect, for a few days later the most outspoken of Pearse's opponents at the meeting

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sent him an unreserved apology for any rudeness. As we left the meeting Pearse's eyes burned and he talked all the way to the Rathfarnham tram at the Pillar, saying intensely: "Let them talk! I am the most dangerous revolutionary of the whole lot of them!" Again in the words was a faith and a simplicity.

Pearse never was a Sinn Féiner in the strictest sense of the words. His political writings contain indeed very outspoken criticisms of Arthur Griffith, whom he blamed for repelling the more vital and Irish-Ireland elements of the Irish Party by nagging personalities and carping criticism. His views at this time are best expressed in his O'Connell Street speech in March 1912, views for which he never apologised and never retracted even in his final statements of his political faith. That speech was delivered at Dublin's last great Home Rule demonstration. Three green flags towered over three platforms in the main street, where thousands of citizens cheered wildly and waved miniature replicas of the floating emerald and harp as a carriage drove slowly by with Mr. Joseph Devlin, M.P., smiling, bowing and turning on a spit, as it were, to the roasting applause of the roaring multitude. "Wee Joe" went onward to his platform near the General Post Office, backed by the old windows of the *Freeman's Journal*. He bounded forward with his tiny green flag and yelled above all the frantic plaudits: "This is Ireland's answer to the taunt that she does not want Home Rule!" Another shattering roar from the citizens and Wee Joe dived into a whirlpool of popular oratory. "Devlin is a good speaker," said Pearse afterwards. "He knows how to please the people." Pearse stood up, shy, austere, alone and spoke in Irish in the future shade of his last stand. Mr. Devlin listened to him in respectful silence and in due course sent him a letter of thanks, regretting he could not understand his

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speech, but hoping for his eloquent aid in future. Yet Pearse spoke in the accents of the future: "We do not seek to destroy the British Empire, we seek Irish freedom. We are all agreed in this: it is our duty, willy-nilly, to achieve freedom for our race. Some of us would be content to remain under the lordship of the English king, others (and I am with them) have never bent their knees or bowed their head to the King of England, and never shall. But I feel I should betray my people if I had not answered this call to-day, since it is clear to me that this Home Rule Bill here recommended to us will make for the advantage of the Irish and strengthen them in their struggle. He who is of that mind would be a coward if he withheld his aid. Do not think that I recommend the Home Rule Bill beforehand, for perhaps we shall have to reject it. But we do say to-day that henceforth Ireland's voice shall be heard. Our patience is spent. With one voice here to-day two hundred thousand Gaels proclaim that they demand freedom and of themselves mean to achieve freedom. Let us band ourselves together and wring it from our foes. I think a good measure can be wrested from them if we but take courage. But if we are tricked again, there is a band of men in Ireland, to whom I myself belong, who will advise Irishmen and Irishwomen to have neither council nor friendship with England, but to answer with the strong hand and the edge of the sword. Let England clearly understand: if we are again betrayed there shall be a red war throughout Ireland."

Whenever I recall Pearse he is addressing crowds like that or talking quietly to boys in another accent or chatting with an old man on the Connemara roads. Behind Pearse rises a Dublin hall and a lecture finishing and the audience moving out, and Pearse rises and they remain: Pearse will say something worth listening to.

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Or there rises the Hermitage five miles away from Dublin, that grey, square, three-storey eighteenth-century mansion, two stone lions on guard over the entrance gate, a wooded avenue winding to the front door behind high stone columns. Kilted groups of boys play riotously in the hurling field or wander through the woods curiously regarding pseudo antiques, Pagan, Christian and Celtic, which a former owner had scattered through the fifty acres to bemuse posterity and please himself, but Patrick Pearse sees at a glance that various Ogham inscriptions are wrong and the cromlech John O'Donovan perhaps in jest marked down in his survey as genuine is a dud of duds. Trees wave and the swaying greenery ever dimmer sweeps towards the Bay and Howth across miles of fields and the roofs of Dublin. Behind rises the blunt and purple mountains under the blue and amber in which the sun shoots downward to rest. A bell is ringing and in twos and threes the boys follow a venerable, bald and bespectacled man indoors. His black gown floats round his shoulders and he waves with graceful and deliberate gestures. A horse chews the long grass in a meadow near-by. But Dr. Patrick Doody, a learned man and conscientious, just then better known to his classical students as Mox, dismisses all the beauty of the landscape with a wave, for it is not on any programme and to programmes he is bound like any Jinn in an Arabian tale coming at a rub of ring or lamp. He hurries the boys into the Study Hall and rules the silence with his steel-cold eye and then bends over some red-bound tome of Greece or Rome.

Under the Grecian colonnade in front of the grey house Pearse and his brother and Thomas MacDonagh pace the gravelled path, while above them loom the windows which have seen Emmet pass and the great rows of trees encircle them, where Curran's voice had sounded

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a century before as he strode down the path through the iron gates to his house, the Priory, across the roads as unheeding of tragedy in his witty moods as these three men held by their jokes and debate. William Pearse is a slight, long-faced man with a lisp and melancholy eyes and dark hair sweeping back in a curve above his forehead. He is the real companion of his brother. He it was who made the young idea wipe its boots on the mat and keep its fork in its left hand and answer all bells promptly. He it was who managed plays and pageants and guided clumsy fingers round circles and curves in the drawing class, where he found one stubborn critic he could never subdue, but who watched him and won fame and died tragically too away in New York, Patrick Tuohy, who laughed in all his classes with one hand in his pocket and dashed off irreverent caricatures with the other, and Willie with a quiet smile in the class let him go his way, admitting he has not much to teach him. In due course Thomas MacDonagh returns to his lodge half a mile away on the Dundrum road with his little dog frisking round him, Marabháin with slender brown body and knowing eyes and shrill bark. The poet and his dog are well known on the Rathfarnham roads as Thomas goes with his long neck-tie floating in the wind talking to any one for hours on anything. He lives in his little lodge rather than in the Hermitage for solitude and freedom. He respects Pearse too much to be quite at ease with him, for Thomas must argue or die. Thomas knows Pearse could not endure religious controversy, but Thomas must thrash out all such questions with those so inclined and he has a more robust humour than Pearse and wider interests. He is more a European, he says himself, and cannot get to the heart of Gaeldom so profoundly as Pearse. There are moments when the native speakers and the Gaelthacht

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bore him stiff and he returns to Elizabethan poetry and France and Greece and Rome, and rounds it all off with a night with the poets in his little lodge, and A. E. comes and smokes his pipe and drinks a modest glass with Thomas when Thomas has it, begad, and if not, begad, A. E. goes without, "only an inch, in any case, like Emerson offered Whitman, saying: 'Walt, we'll see the dawn!'" And sometimes Padraic Colum and James Stephens arrive, and one Hallow Eve they melted all his window-weights and cast magic spells, and in the morning Thomas cooks his breakfast on a flaring petrol stove and hurries down to the Hermitage with an armful of books ready to talk the head off everybody. On quiet evenings Thomas busies himself with his poems and the *Irish Review*. He always halts near the two St. Enda lions over the iron gate to converse with Micheál Mag Ruadháirí, who is Pearse's gardener, and watches the boys who covet the apples in the great garden, for Thomas knows that Micheál's quaint blue eyes are too weak to read print; but his mind is a very library of Mayo proverbs and legends, and Micheál can dictate a history with only one pause for breath and chant a Rabelaisian or reverent Gaelic rann in his greenhouses as the mood takes him, and well deserves every one of the seven gold medals he has won for oratory, and if Micheál prefers to wear all seven medals on a velvet board pinned to his lapel on feast days, that is his affair. For though there are Gaels who bore Thomas, Micheál is not one, and Thomas is all for Micheál's efforts to save the apples in that eighteenth-century garden, though Patrick Pearse thinks it only human for the boys to raid the apple trees, however grimly he lectures the raiders in his study.

Patrick Pearse smiled quietly to himself over the comedies of the inside life of St. Enda's. He knew his pupils very well down to the nicknames they honoured



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him with, and chuckled in private at the pride and reflected glory some of them were conscious of as his fosterlings. His heart is with the romping boys in the dormitories he can still with a look, but he will have no silence rule at meals and his fifty boys can make what din they like until he restores quiet by rising and turning them into the hurling field. Shortly after the Insurrection an American visitor was shown over the Hermitage and walked in silence from room to room. He saw everywhere the stamp of Patrick Pearse, from the library with its hundreds of volumes of the rarest and most chosen Gaelic texts, its choice editions of Shakespeare, its rows of Irish histories from Keating to Madden, to the classrooms and dormitories and Study Hall. He walked under the great oaks and elms and copper beeches and looked towards the Bay through the high frontal porchway, and said sadly: "His friends should have contrived some plan to keep Pearse out of militant politics, for surely his true work was here." Many readers of the *Murder Machine*—his indictment of the Irish educational system of his time—must have felt a like misgiving despite Pearse's insistence on the necessity of freedom before any real effective re-creation of education was possible. One of his cares as the end drew near was the consciousness that the collapse of his college would disappoint some very staunch supporters. He was determined to keep its gold and white banner afloat over his fifty pupils, and would have mourned the day when its envelopes with armed hero seal and Ossianic motto, "Truth on our lips, strength in our hands and cleanness in our hearts," should brighten the post no more. "I don't want to found a school just to smash it up," he said when he first faced that choice in the crisis of 1912 and promptly suppressed a small militant Gaelic weekly he had founded, and then by sheer will-power saved St. Enda's and pulled

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it through with a profit of fifty pounds to the good when its most convinced supporters had thought its plight desperate—as it would have been long before except for Pearse's iron effort and sacrifice. Year after year he and his brother went without salary, and at the last would have succeeded beyond a doubt had the times been less complex and Pearse not heard a more urgent call to action. That was inevitable, and were he to return to-day his critics would be hard put to it to have the best of the argument for all Sean O'Casey's splashing of Pearse's ardent rhetoric with acid and Sir James O'Connor's time-serving cant about eleutheromania. Even to-day Pearse can still speak for himself in his political pamphlets and in his great personal testament, *The Singer*. The old fire burns clearly there, the old fire of his occasional simple-hearted remark to a friendly crowd of sceptics: "To hold out against England for an hour, imagine! How glorious that would be!" Yet it was possible to quizz Pearse about this eagerness of his to end his days on a scaffold, although so sincere and fundamental a mood was this with him that in the Hermitage we rarely tried this. He would laugh but the jest would seem to stab something deep within him, though he could enjoy jokes about his extremism. For instance, he once wrote month by month a boys' serial, *The Wandering Hawk*, for *Fianna*, the organ of Madame de Marcievicz's boy scouts. He based the story on the life of St. Enda's College and drew a very humorous picture of himself as the Headmaster under the flippant nickname of "Old Snuffy." Once he had scruples that the story was becoming too melodramatic. He shook his head and paused over the pages of the current instalment scattered over the table in his bold and very clear handwriting. He appealed to some of us and read some sentences aloud: it was too absurd, he had just wrecked a gunboat, would that do, did we think? "Good

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heavens," said one of us, "only one gunboat! How moderate! Why not half the British Fleet?" This restored his confidence. Laughing heartily, Pearse went ahead with his writing, chuckling to himself until he had finished the chapter. Then he gave the group of critics a shrewd thrust or two at weak points in their own armour. He was not going to let us get away with it so easily.

Pearse himself noted the change in his outlook when he moved out to Rathfarnham into the Hermitage, so closely linked with the tragedy of Emmet in its historical associations. Where in Cullenswood House he had spoken of the Fionn and Cuchulainn sagas and succeeded admirably in realising his bilingual programme in the Hermitage, he spoke oftener to his boys of past efforts to gain Irish independence and he realised less his early ideals of an Irish-speaking school. His own picture of these years is to be found in *The Story of a Success*. There he gives his own ideals and the school as he saw it, although he is silent about the things which depressed and hampered him: frequent changes of staff, which made it harder to carry out his first plans fully for an Irish-speaking school, new pupils not quite so promising as his first forty on the opening day, the burden of building debts, a lack of general support and a growing political prejudice against him. But even here in the Hermitage there was no undue political propaganda except where Irish history retold is in itself a very powerful visualisation of the great men and the great glories and great mistakes of the past and a very powerful incentive to youth to seek future national movements free from time-weary blunders. Those of his pupils who eventually took part in the 1916 Insurrection might well have done so had they never met Pearse, for great as Pearse was as a kindler to action he cannot be held responsible for the home associations and

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the national movements which had already moulded the characters and outlook of the odd twenty or so senior and ex-students of his who joined him. Probably the associations of the Hermitage swayed Pearse more than Pearse swayed the majority of his pupils. If a locality can preserve the past and haunt a receptive mind with past good or evil, assuredly the Hermitage haunted the mind and personality of Pearse. Across the road from the Hermitage stands the Priory, the old home of John Philpot Curran, where Robert Emmet had wooed and dreamed in his day. Robert Emmet's memory haunted Pearse, and this haunting is clamant throughout Pearse's later speeches: he seems to see Emmet tapping his cane along the Rathfarnham roads, rambling through the Hermitage grounds and plucking grapes from the vines or lying hidden among the heather on Kilmashogue Mountain, which Pearse could see from his study windows, or standing on a scaffold before a silent Dublin crowd. Deep spoke to deep, he said of Mitchel, and that was true of Pearse. From his writings the figure of the man rises again to-day. In his first writings one finds the scholar brooding over the saga of Cuchulainn until its chivalry burns in him as Homer and Milton burned in Shelley through dark hours and shattered visions. But it is from his panegyric of Emmet rather than his panegyric of Tone that flames into life the Pearse we knew in the Hermitage. He follows Emmet's footsteps from the Hermitage to Dublin with the only difference that he can cry in the end exultantly that where Emmet held out for a two-hours' riot compromised by bunglers and a ghastly murder of a noble judge, Pearse has held out for a week and hopes for the future, and the immediate future, too. This is how he would speak of Emmet, and really sketch himself:

"There are in every generation those who shrink from

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the ultimate sacrifice, but there are in every generation those who make it with joy and laughter, and these are the salt of the generations, the heroes who stand midway between God and man. Patriotism is in large part a memory of heroic dead men and a striving to accomplish some task left unfinished by them. Had they not gone before, made their attempts, and suffered the sorrow of their failures, we should long ago have lost the tradition of faith and service, having no memory in the heart or any unaccomplished dream. . . . This the heroes have done for us; for their spirits indwell in the place where they lived, and the hills of Ireland must be rent and her cities levelled with the ground and all her children driven out upon the seas of the world before those voices are silenced that bid us be faithful still and to make no peace with England until Ireland is ours. . . . I live in a place very full of heroic memories. In the room in which I work in at St. Enda's College, Robert Emmet is said often to have sat; in our garden is a vine which they call Emmet's Vine and from which he is said to have plucked grapes; through our wood runs a path which is called Emmet's path—they say that he and Sarah Curran walked there; at an angle of our boundary wall there is a little fortified lodge called Emmet's Fort. Across the road from us is a thatched cottage whose tenant in 1803 was in Green Street Courthouse all the long day that Emmet stood on trial, with a horse saddled without that he might bring news of the end to Sarah Curran. Half a mile from us across the fields is Butterfield House, where Emmet lived the days preceding the rising. . . . And his death was august. In the great space of Thomas Street an immense silent crowd; in the front of St. Catherine's Church a gallows upon a platform; a young man climbs to it, quiet, serene, almost silent, they say—ah, he was very brave; there is no cheer

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from the crowd, no groan; this man is about to die for them, but no man dares to say aloud, 'God bless you, Robert Emmet.' Dublin must one day wash out in blood the shameful memory of that acquiescence. . . . A friend of mine knew an old woman who told him how the blood flowed down upon the pavement, and how she sickened with horror as she saw the dogs of the street lap up that noble blood. . . . We are so dominated by the memory of that splendid death of his . . . that we forget the life of which that death was only the necessary completion. . . . And his task was just such a task as some of us have undertaken: he had to go through the same repellent routine of work . . . he had the same sordid difficulties as we have, yea, even the vulgar difficulty of want of funds. And he had the same poor human material to work with, men who misunderstood, men who bungled, men who talked too much. . . . Yes, the task we take up again is just Emmet's task of silent unattractive work . . . cherishing in our hearts the mighty hope that to us, though so unworthy, it may be given to bring to accomplishment the thing he left unaccomplished, but working on even when that hope dies within us."<sup>1</sup>

This very long extract shows the best and worst of Pearse. Only his own personality and sincerity lift parts of it from platitude and the harking on bloodshed and the rhetorical appeal to varied audiences from sentimental Yankees who never saw Dublin in their lives to the boys of Fianna Eireann to avenge the dog-lapped blood of Emmet, has left him open to very severe criticism even from sympathisers. For one thing this note was struck with a frequency that became monotonous in Pearse's speeches. It recurred with an almost sinister frequency towards the end and once infuriated a master in the act of rousing the populace to arms, James Connolly, to a

<sup>1</sup> *Political Writings*, First Edition, pp. 66-82.

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bitter comment which wounded Pearse deeply. Pearse wrote when both men were planning armed revolt on the eve of Christmas 1915: "The last sixteen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. . . . It is good for the world that such things should be done. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. Such august homage was never offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country." Connolly was so infuriated with this sentence that he went out of his way to answer an imaginary correspondent in his paper, somewhat in these terms: "No, we do not think that the old heart of the earth needs to be warmed with the red wine of millions of lives. We think any one who does is a blithering idiot. We are sick of such teaching, and the world is sick of such teaching. We also utterly loathe and despise all the mouthers about war in times of peace and preachers of peace in times of war who infest this island." Pearse looked very hurt when he opened his copy of Connolly's paper and read this fierce comment on an article he was very proud of. He shook his head and said truly enough and with great emphasis: "There is not a line in my article with which Connolly should not agree!" Pearse's defence of his lyrical appeals to the sword and his gospel of blood-sacrifice was that he sincerely believed in them and was prepared to stake his own life on their truth. He also contended he was more honest and more logical than those who had denounced force to free Ireland, but who at the moment he wrote *Peace and the Gael*—the article which infuriated Connolly and afterwards with several other sentences torn from their context elsewhere in Pearse enriched O'Casey's *Plough and the Stars*—were moving heaven and earth to make Irishmen use force against the Germans. His glorification of war expressed itself in a violent

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dislike of the writings of Tolstoy: he could find no merit in the Russian's short stories and novels, and refused even to consider their claims as literature. His worship of military discipline was fanatical to the point of absurdity. Until the 1913 Strike turned his mind to Connolly's writings, which left a deep mark on his thought, he feared the Irish Labour movement and the friendly relations with British Labour unions as a danger to Nationalism. His early desire to live in history was so intense as to be almost insane. And always in him there was a curious conflict between the dreamer and the doer.

When the Devil's Advocate comes to judge the leaders of the Irish Revolution, he will urge in the case of Pearse a similarity to the world-figure of Lenin in this at least: they both were men of one book, but added to their one book. Lenin may have based his beliefs, tactics and actions upon Marx, whom he studies line by line, beating all the theologians and exegetes who ever lived with his wanderings through the mazes of *Capital*, down to the last word of his master. So too with Pearse and his Four Fathers of the Nationalist Church: Tone, Mitchel, Davis and Lalor. As Marx found his inspiration in Hegel, Ricardo and French revolutionary history, and Lenin in Marx plus a hundred years of Russian revolt, so Pearse built upon his Four Fathers with a dash of Catholicism and Gaelicism. And like Marx and Lenin, what is splendid in the masters becomes tawdry in the disciples, what is noble and personal in Pearse's borrowed accents becomes monotonous cant on a hundred Irish political platforms after his death. This is no reproach to Pearse. Undoubtedly he developed logically enough the ideals and teachings he found in his Four Fathers as the very mouthpiece of the rising National movement, for eighteen years after his death his teaching reveals its vitality. His flaming idealism is the noblest creed Ireland



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ever knew. His flash of intuition on the eve of 1916 that now was the opportune moment to strike was justified by the result. To have known Pearse was to realise his sincerity and unselfishness and fundamental health of mind.

But the Devil's Advocate will urge, provoked more by the successors of Pearse than Pearse himself, that though Pearse has been vindicated by results and by history, that his own temperament coloured his views, and ponder how far personal disillusion and ambition shaped his acts and outlook. Only very simple-minded admirers or very dishonest politicians can ignore this question, and to ignore it to-day is no service to Pearse or to truth. There was a disconcerting side to Pearse, especially in his earlier years. No honest portrait can hide certain shadows: a Napoleonic complex which expressed itself in a fanatical glorification of war for its own sake, an excess of sentiment which almost intoxicated him both on the platform and in private ventures, a recklessness in action and the narrow outlook of a very respectable Dubliner who has never left his city or family circle for very long. This is the very worst that the Devil's Advocate will be able to advance against Patrick Pearse. He had no petty vices nor meannesses, and to live with him was to fall under his persuasive spell. He was a recluse and a mystic, and no reader of the above list of possible grounds of criticism against Patrick Pearse should fail to correct them by Pearse's own personal defence in his poems, *The Rebel* and *The Fool*, and his play, *The Singer*, all written in answer to his own heart-searchings on the eve of the Insurrection. The testimony of his friends is unanimous: they all loved him even when his faults stood out before their eyes. Pearse towered over the Ireland of his time, a man who meant what he said and died and lived for it. His writings, including his

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polemical writings, have stood the test of time: they are readable even when the events they deal with are unfamiliar to the reader.

There were strange contradictions in this great man, a man so great that it goes against the grain to have to search for the flaws in him as one remembers how he soared over the provincial and Anglicised Ireland of his early years and confounded the time-serving politicians of his later days, and with open eyes walked to death with all his hopes in ruin around him. Although his ideal was the sword, he could not cut a loaf to save his life or shave himself even with a safety razor, or for all his lyrics to smoking battlefields bear the sight of human suffering without squirming, but he would watch all night beside an ailing pupil, and on the eve of his surrender he soothed a wounded British soldier to sleep with gentle words. He could keep a whole school of riotous boys in order with a look, or kill himself by inches with several arduous undertakings which would have crushed most men, but muse over a butterfly's wings for hours when his conscience told him he should be busy with his school programme. He knew what he wanted when he was little more than a youth, and accomplished everything to which his essentially noble ambition moved him, but at times his impetuosity imperilled things dear to him. A colleague has quoted a criticism of him: "Pearse could never wait." This recklessness in action was well exemplified in his conduct of St. Enda's College, where, when his experiment was threatened by debts incurred by a lack of support he justly resented, he not only plunged boldly into greater debt by even bolder developments—for instance he moved out to Rathfarnham, necessarily losing half his pupils and increased his burden—but he allowed himself distractions like *An Barr Buadh*, for which in calmer moments he blamed himself severely

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for undertaking. His brother was to a large extent the brake on this recklessness of Pearse, for Willie never scrupled to tell him the truth even about a bad speech, and was capable of the reproach: "Pat, you made a rotten speech this evening. You repeated yourself and dragged on and on until the poor people were bored stiff!"

Pearse listened most courteously to all critics and went on doing as he liked until Willie lisped his fierce word. Pearse had one stock defence to all criticisms of his actions: he could not stand still till he rotted, and it was better to do something than nothing, and Ireland was full of those who criticised and never did anything. His remorse, however, on occasion, could be comical. Once he had told all his senior students that all things were possible where there was a will; where there was a will a man could be king of Ireland or master the toughest Latin verb. Then after a severe school crisis, when his will and nothing else had pulled the school through, he confessed that it was best not to try the will on impossible obstacles or you made a fool of yourself. "I was mad!" he said to me after this same school crisis and his suppression of his above-mentioned *Trumpet of Victory*, "to start such a paper when the school was trembling in the balance. Why didn't you stop me?" This very question he had asked me when we visited a printing office to look over the proofs of the first issue, but he asked the question highly delighted with the appearance of the paper and with a joyous anticipation of the furious letters certain Gaelic enthusiasts would bombard him with for printing his paper in Roman type and his caustic open letters to political celebrities. He managed, too, to publish some of his finest poems in *An Barr Buadh* before he recovered his sanity and asked the question a second time. He followed it up by an open letter to himself in the paper

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poking fun at himself. He gravely twitted himself for being a dark cloud over any social gathering, and asked whether his English blood were responsible or whether there were not two Pearses, one grim and aloof, the second a jocund orator capable of kindling listening hosts at will. He declared in the end that he is in doubt as to which Pearse is which, and advises him to stick to his schoolmastering and play no more blasts on his *Trumpet of Victory*. Nor did he but at once shut down the paper and threw all his energy into saving his school. Pearse in his dashing moods struck you as quite insane, but as one who knew he was and one with whom it was pleasanter to go mad than with all the solid, sensible folk in the world.

One who knew the late John Dillon said that Dillon was never more grief-stricken in his life than when he heard the news of Patrick Pearse's death, nor so angry as when he heard of Willie Pearse's. Similar were the reactions of the Dubliners, to whom the Brothers Pearse were familiar figures. They were inseparable. Sometimes you would see them passing down the Hermitage avenue at the head of their pupils, laughing, talking, striding along *en route* for an excursion or play rehearsal. Or perhaps behind the scenes in the Abbey Theatre, busy with a Passion Play or distributing heroic gear and garb. Again, seated in their small room in the Hermitage basement in strenuous debate, where Willie scrupled not to tell Pat just what he ought to be told or contradicted him stoutly or talked till a late hour over bills and books. Their mother watched them, laughing or admonishing them. When the times grew tenser she would wait up for them in spite of all their warnings that they would not return until four.

Behind the Brothers Pearse stood Margaret Pearse, and it is impossible to understand them without knowing what kind of a woman she was.

## EIGHT

TWO sentences in *The Singer* light up Margaret Pearse as her sons knew her. The first is spoken by MacDara, the unknown leader of the insurgents, who suddenly reveals himself and goes out alone to save the people by his death, unarmed: "'Tis women who keep all the great vigils." The second is spoken by MacDara's mother, Máire Ní Fhiannachta, to his sweetheart, Sighle: "I am his mother. Don't I know every fibre of his body? Don't I know every thought of his mind? He never told me, but well I knew." And Pearse sketches his mother again in his story *The Keening Woman*, when he describes the mother who would "have pity in her heart for Cain and for Judas and for Diarmuid of the Gall." It was from her people with their memories of battles and gibbets in County Meath in one of the most tragic years of Irish history that Pearse as we have seen first drank of Irish speech and folk-tale and ballad, and the militant tradition ran on down to her own father, who had been a Fenian. All her life Margaret Pearse kept a great vigil, for though she made more jokes than any woman who ever lived and was cheerful and great-hearted, she would tell you simply that she had never known peace of mind for many years before her husband's death, fifteen years of business worry, the health of her children, and then the shadow of the coming loss of her sons, which shadowed her from 1913, when the Irish Volunteers were founded.

For all her sorrows her hair was long speckled with black, and though as long as I can remember her she wore

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black too, her merry grey-blue eyes and honest laugh banished all the sombre and morbid from her company. She was quiet and industrious and many who came to Cullenswood House and the Hermitage hardly knew her. Yet she ran the house with her "all hands must do this," and "can't all hands do that," and could miss a train three times in one day and see the joke against herself and yet remain indignant to the end because her family twitted her with sitting through a whole performance of *Charley's Aunt* waiting for the fun to begin. There was an iron beneath her softness: in later years she chaffed the Black and Tans to their teeth when she met them on their raiding parties, and fixed them with a shattering look which lowered their revolvers and their truculent voices. Once a blustering raider struck her with a revolver and howled: "Mother of Pearse, eh? What about the men your murder gang have killed? Had they no mothers?" She silenced him with one question: "Oh, had you?"

Margaret Pearse lived for her sons. "She thinks Pat is a young god!" muttered an angry relative to me once, but with this I could not agree, for I had a vivid recollection of Pearse showing his weakest side to his mother. He could stand anything except a room without a fire, and had followed her from room to room with overclouded face, murmuring dolefully. It was amusing to watch Pearse's submissive affection to his mother. Even on Easter eve, when she said good-bye to him at the Hermitage gate and he was marching down into Dublin, ready to tackle the greatest British Army known to history, she had said: "Now, Pat, above all, do nothing rash!" and he had dutifully replied: "No, mother." Often she told me what a good son he had been, running his father's business after his death so that Willie could complete his art studies, and shouldering an old debt of

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his father's as a debt of honour although the debt had been caused through James Pearse's hatred of litigation and due in the first case to the dishonesty of another, but endured by "the Governor" rather than call in those devils of lawyers. She was proud of the "Governor," and this pride flashed out on that Easter morning when eleven of us marched out of the Hermitage to join Patrick Pearse and she insisted on sewing a Sacred Heart badge on all our coats and heard with mingled grief and anger of orders and counter-orders, saying: "Oh, is he to be deserted now? Well, good-bye, boys, and remember this. If you ever are free, it is the son of an Englishman who will have freed you!" And this grey hour was lighted with a certain humour, for we remembered the many injunctions she had addressed to us as well as her sons, not to be rash. There was that day in the lower room when Pearse had come in tired in trying days when he expected arrest and dropped his glove with the automatic revolver inside on the table and blushed and laughed when she asked: "Good heavens, Pat, whatever is that for?" And he whose intervention at Easter and before had in fact saved the lives of these political detectives known to Dublin as "G-men," answered half-humbly and half-defiantly: "G-men, mother!" Her humour was more aroused by the evidence of a Dublin policeman against Pearse in a case which was dismissed on a charge of refusing to halt a motor-car when called upon. "He said, your Worship, my name is Pearse, and I defy the law and all that appertains thereto!" Margaret Pearse enjoyed Pearse's indignation that he should be charged with using such stilted English and his amazed look as he read and re-read the evidence in the paper.

Three passions inspired Margaret Pearse: God, Ireland and her children. Her religion would flash up in some quiet phrase: she could not bear to watch the long rows

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of Communicants in the Dublin churches without joining them, "to share with them the Bread and Life, to share with them the Living Word": on a Good Friday she would defy her doctor and half a dozen priests and keep a Black Fast: to her all spite, malice, envy, slander and uncharitableness were things remote and abhorred, and in this she was like Pearse himself and valued the compliment some one once paid Pearse in an argument about the alleged shortcomings of some political celebrity. She had protested: "Pat never said a word against him." And she treasured the retort: "Don't quote that man to me again. He never said a bad word against any one." To her the war for Irish freedom was the most holy of wars, although when I knew her in Cullenswood House and the first year or two at the Hermitage she had the vaguest notions about politics, and would ask, with seeming innocence at least: "Now what is the difference between Home Rule and Separation?" She had no very definite political creed, but she had a deep national instinct and a hatred in her very bones of the English domination of Ireland. "My good woman," she once told a critic of the Irish Volunteers, "don't argue with me about ambushes. Why, you will find ambushes in the Bible!" And she waved her hand and laughed her merry laugh. Her ideas about right and wrong were very clear, and she had no rancour, although this very simplicity and goodness of heart left her open to be used by more astute folk than herself, especially if the clinching argument that "Pat would have done this" or "Pat would have said that" could be dragged in by hook or by crook. This is clearly shown in the speech she made against the 1922 Treaty, and as the speech reveals herself very well it may be quoted now: it was of deep and ironical interest to me then and since as Mrs. Pearse appealed to a conversation Pearse had once had with me, and from



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that conversation then and now I drew very different conclusions:

“I rise to support the motion of our President for the rejection of this Treaty. My reasons for doing so are various, but my first reason for doing so is on my sons’ account. It has been said here on several occasions that Padraic Pearse would have accepted this Treaty. I deny it, and on his account I will not accept it. Neither would his brother Willie accept it, because his brother was part and parcel of him. I am proud to say to-day that Padraic Pearse was a follower and disciple, and a true disciple, of Tom Clarke’s. Therefore he could not accept this Treaty. I also wish to say another reason why I could not accept it is the reason of fear. As I explained here at the private meeting, that from 1916—I now wish to go over this again in public—from 1916 until we had the visits from the Black and Tans, I had comfortable, nice, happy nights and happy days because I knew my boys had done right, and I knew I had done right in giving them freely for their country; but when the Black and Tans came—then no nights, no days of rest had I. Always we had to be on the alert. But even the Black and Tans alone would not frighten me as much as if I accepted that Treaty: because I feel in my heart—and I would not say it only I feel it—that the ghosts of my sons would haunt me. Now another thing has been said about Padraic Pearse: that he would accept a Home Rule Bill such as this. Well, he would not. Now in my own simple way I will relate a thing that happened, I think it was in 1915 or in 1916. He sent me into Dublin on a very urgent message, and when I came to Westmoreland Street I saw on the placards, ‘Home Rule Bill Passed.’ At that time I knew very little of politics. I was going on a very urgent message as I told you. I leaped out of my tram, got into another and went as fast

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as I could up the roads of Rathfarnham. When I went in I found him as usual, writing, and he turned round and said: 'Back so quickly?' 'Yes,' said I, 'the Home Rule Bill is passed.' He sat writing. The tears came into his eyes. He got up, and putting his arms around me said: 'Little mother, this is not the Home Rule Bill we want, but perhaps in a short time you will see what we intend to do and what freedom we intend to fight for.' He then asked me about what he had sent me for, but I had come back without it. 'Never mind,' he said, 'I will do it myself to-morrow; go and get something to eat.' I said to him then: 'What are you going to do?' 'Mother,' he said, 'don't ask me, but you will know time enough.' Now, in face of this, do you mean to tell me Padraic Pearse would have voted for this Treaty? I say no! I am sure here to-day the man to whom Padraic Pearse addressed these words—I am certain he is present—he said he could understand the case for compromise but personally rejected it. As an instance: when discussing the now much-mooted question of Colonial Home Rule he said that had he ever a voice in rejecting or accepting such proposals his vote would be cast among the 'noes.' Well now my vote for accepting this is equal to his. I may say just a word on the oath. Our friend, Mr. MacCabe, read out the Ten Commandments. All I can say is what our catechism taught us in my days was: it is perjury to break your oath. I consider I'd be perjuring myself in breaking the oath I had taken to Dáil Éireann. An oath to me is a most sacred vow made in the presence of Almighty God to witness the truth and the truth alone. Therefore that is another reason of mine. Now men here may think little of an oath, and think little of a word of honour, but I repeat here a little incident that happened twenty minutes before Padraic Pearse was executed in Kilmainham, and it will let you know what he thought

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of a word of honour, much less an oath. He, poor fellow, had something written for you Irishmen, and to-day I am ashamed of some of you here. Had that note then come out from Kilmainham, I am sure we would have had many more on our side in rejecting this Treaty, but the priest whom he wished to take out that document had given his word of honour to the British Government that he would take out nothing. Padraic asked him to take out the document—at least, to take it to his mother, because he knew if his mother got it, it would be in the right quarters. The priest told him: ‘Padraic,’ he said, ‘I have given my word of honour to take out nothing.’ ‘Well, Father,’ said he, ‘if you have given your word of honour don’t break it, but ask those in charge to give Mother this because she is bound to hear it sometime and I want to get it out now.’ If that document had been got out—it may be got yet, but, alas! I am afraid it is too late—the people here would not have made up their minds so willingly to go the wrong path and not the right path. People will say to me: ‘The people of Ireland want this Treaty.’ I have been through Ireland for the past few years and I know the hearts and sorrows of the wives of Ireland. I have studied them; no one studied them more, and let no one here say that these women from their hearts could say they accept that Treaty. They say it through fear; they say it through fear of the aeroplanes and all that has been said to them. Now I will ask you again: there are some members here who may remember what Padraic Pearse said in the early autumn of 1915. He said it when he was inspecting the Volunteers at Vinegar Hill. He told them there on that day: ‘we, the Volunteers, are formed here not for half of Ireland, not to give the British Garrison control of part of Ireland. No! We are here for the whole of Ireland.’ Therefore Padraic Pearse would not have

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accepted a Treaty like this with only two-thirds of his country in it. In the name of God I will ask the men that have used Padraic Pearse's name here again to use it in honour; to use it in truthfulness. One deputy mentioned here about rattling the bones of the dead. I only wish we could recall them. Remember the day will come—soon I hope, Free State or otherwise—when those bones shall be lifted as if they were the bones of saints. We won't let them rattle. No! but we will hold what they upheld, and no matter what any one says I feel that I and others have a right to speak in the name of their dead."

The character of Margaret Pearse is well depicted by herself in this speech, and that she firmly believed every word of it there can be no question. Her innocence of politics is also equally well revealed, while her arguments about Pearse and the Treaty are the feeblest part of it. Obviously what Pearse thought in 1916 had no relation to what he thought in 1907 or what he might have thought in 1922. Her conversation with him about the Home Rule Bill might well have brought tears to his eyes when he had settled all his worldly affairs fully determined that he would head an insurrection before the war ended, and haunted by the possible fate of his mother after his death had already in a statement left with his solicitor in October 1914, recommended her to the care of the Clan na Gael of America; this document was only to be opened in the event of his "death or early arrest." As the Home Rule Bill was passed into law about September 1914 it is evident that Mrs. Pearse's memory had failed her slightly and Pearse's emotion easily understandable. He would certainly have been emphatic in repudiating Home Rule in September 1914, for when Connolly proposed an agitation about that time in favour of Colonial Home Rule, or rather the repeal of all clauses of the existing Act which

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denied Ireland the powers enjoyed by Australia, Canada and South Africa, mainly as a means of embarrassing the Redmondites, Pearse merely shrugged his shoulders and implied that Connolly could amuse himself so if he wished. In the war Pearse saw the "moment for which the generations have been waiting," although he sighed that the moment had come a year too soon. He would say in private that God alone had saved the Republicans and Separatists in 1914: had the British Government put the Home Rule Act in force the British Army would have had twice as many Irish recruits and Separatism would have been dead for a generation. All these things must have seethed in his mind as he looked on his simple-hearted mother, who had interrupted her shopping and taken a tram back five miles in haste to tell him about the poster.

There is much unconscious pathos in the simple statement that Pearse was a follower of Tom Clarke, when Patrick Pearse never followed any one. The speech proceeds to refer vaguely to a conversation I once had with Pearse and mentioned in *The Man Called Pearse*; Mrs. Pearse indeed uses several lines from the book, and in full they read: "He could understand the case for compromise but personally rejected it. As an instance, when discussing the now much-mooted question of Colonial Home Rule, he averred that had he ever a voice in rejecting or accepting such proposals, he would cast his vote with the noes, not considering, however, the action of those who championed such a scheme as in any wise dishonourable." Even in this form it is evident that Pearse would have spoken to Dáil Eireann in somewhat different accents than his mother, but she was quite honest and sincere in her use of it, and quoted the passage to me in amazement when I argued with her in 1922 in favour of the Treaty. Yet I had often told her the

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circumstances of the conversation which took place in the Hermitage in the early part of 1916. I had quoted to Pearse the opinion, then common enough in some Volunteer circles, that Republicans who rose in revolt and met with a fair measure of initial success would be mad to refuse a settlement on the basis of Colonial Home Rule from a British Government. The real start of the discussion arose from an attack on some members of the Hobson-MacNeill group. Their motives had been attacked and I had said I understood some of them held this view. This seemed to impress Pearse in their favour for his face cleared and he said after a minute of deliberation with the emphasis on the words I give in italics: "*Ah, that is a question of peace terms.* More slowly he went on: *It is not a dishonourable proposal,* but personally, had I ever any voice in accepting or rejecting it, I would vote against it." Pearse was always ready to lead a forlorn hope, but he was open to persuasion, and had any one convinced him that a course of action was morally wrong or opposed to the interests of Ireland he would always change his mind. He was ready to lead the Volunteers against the Redmondites before he did but gave way to argument that such a course was not in the interests of the organisation. He voted against the admission of the Redmondite nominees to the Provisional Committee of the Volunteers, prepared to lead what seemed to him at the moment a hopeless stand against the great authority of Redmond, but rather relieved he had been spared the burden. It is true he afterwards changed his views on the matter and wished the split had come earlier, but his whole attitude was that of a man open to argument and swayed only by a desire to act according to the interests of Ireland. This was characteristic of him. He would listen to others and make quick and thorough decisions, regardless of popu-

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larity or the desire to save his face. In Easter week, although it would have been easier for him to go down, fighting, he thought of the citizens of Dublin and the possibility of saving the lives of his men and hoisted his White Flag. He was open to the criticism that he had not fought as long as he might have, or that to be consistent with the more fiery passages in his speeches he should have perished in the flames with his men or waited to hoist his flag over a few more corpses and ruins and to various other metaphysical criticisms subsequently minutely debated by the doctrinaires then shivering under the Dublin roofs. Then as ever, Pearse acted, with aching heart and erect head, but he acted.

On the question of the oath, too, Pearse had very clear views. His word was his bond, and that he should tell a priest, weighed down under so tragic duty to keep his word of honour could surprise no one who knew him. In Mrs. Pearse's hearing, I enjoyed the very different judgment of a jolly monk: "If I had been there, Pearse would never have heard about the authorities asking me for that insulting undertaking. I should have slipped Pearse's letter into my pocket and let Friend and Maxwell go to hell!" Mrs. Pearse was not shocked at this moral laxity although her admiration for Pat and the noble priest remained undimmed.

In all great moral issues, however, Pearse was no scruple-monger. For instance, although a strong temperance advocate, he laughed at the belief that the temperance pledge in itself was a very binding promise. "Nonsense!" he said with a shake of his head, "it would be more honourable and better for a man to keep such a pledge, but the idea that any man can pledge himself for ever to any course of action is absurd. No man can bind himself like that." So late as the first years at the Hermitage, when Home Rule was in the air, Pearse discussed the oath

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of allegiance, and hardly regarded it as important. He was even in certain circumstances prepared to take such an oath at Westminster: "At the most," he said, "such an oath would only bind me while there." This was characteristic of his independence of catch-cries.

And not alone Margaret Pearse in that debate was haunted by Pearse. Another speaker arose and as he spoke it must have seemed to her that her son himself was speaking when Liam Mellows made his remarkable confession of faith, grave eyes burning under his bushy brows: "To my mind the Republic does exist. It is a living tangible thing, something for which men gave their lives. . . . I hold the honour of Ireland too sacred a thing to make a bargain over . . . it is not the will of the people, it is the fear of the people. . . . You may talk about your constitution in Canada, your united South Africa or Commonwealth of Australia, but the British Empire to me does not mean that. It means to me that terrible thing that has spread its tentacles all over the earth, that has crushed the lives out of people and exploited its own when it could not exploit anybody else. . . . We would rather have this country poor and indigent, eking out a poor existence on the soil; as long as they possessed their souls, their minds and their honour." And undoubtedly Liam Mellows thought he was speaking as Pearse would speak, for he had said to me in the lobbies of the Dáil wistfully: "Ah, if Pearse were alive to speak to-day." And as Margaret Pearse listened to him, she remembered Mellows hiding in St. Enda's College in disguise on Easter eve and her long talks with him and his dash on Holy Thursday to Galway to lead an insurrection with few arms. . . .

Mellows had caught the accents of Pearse in his militant moods, that fundamental mood of Pearse, vivid and tenacious in the tradition of Ireland now, that call



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to one foredoomed to sacrifice himself to rouse his country: "One man may save a nation as one man redeemed the world." It often escaped Pearse in passionate phrases and Margaret Pearse could remember its more subdued expressions as he sat sorrowful in the Hermitage and told her he and his brother would go soon, have to go and leave all the beauty of the world, but stir Ireland as she had not been stirred for a hundred years. Here the Pearse who spoke is the Pearse who lives on for ever in his O'Donovan Rossa Oration, his Tone and Emmet panegyrics, one small book of twelve poems—and the Republican Proclamation of 1916.

Confronting Mellows in that debate, while Margaret Pearse sat in her sad, black robes beside the Easter week widows, deep in that argument she continued to the end of her days, for it was always her son and Nineteen Sixteen with her, sat another man with the profile of a Caesar and the eyes of some vision-wrapped saint of old, Richard Mulcahy. Years after he said an eloquent word in this argument too over the grave of Collins, then so vital and so silent on the Dáil benches. In the shade of the great Celtic cross which marks the scene of Collins's last hour, Richard Mulcahy spoke these words in August 1932:

"When Pearse sat in his cell in Arbour Hill it was my privilege, four days before his execution, to stand in his cell with him to ask him was it true that surrender had been ordered, and whether the men of Fingal, who had given an excellent account of themselves during the week, could do any more good by holding out longer; and there was a look on Pearse's face of the most sublime peace and the most sublime hope. Was it his confidence in the force of arms that four days before his death, a few days before the bravest of our Irish soldiers were to fall before the blasting of guns—was it confidence in arms that

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spread peace over Pearse's face that day? It was the knowledge that no arms in this country could cow the people's spirit here or prevent them achieving any work they sought to do. It was knowing that, knowing the capacity for work, for facing facts, for going ahead with the most dangerous and difficult work, that lay in our Irishmen and women, that put Pearse's face in a most supreme calm that day. How could he have faith in arms in front of the firing-party that he knew his own spirit and the spirit of his people were going to beat down and beat down for ever from this country? Fulfilling Pearse's hope, you set up a Parliament here in 1919, and that Parliament was suppressed by arms, and it was only then that the Irish Volunteers had to resort to arms to protect that Parliament and to keep here the institution that the Irish people had set up, and to keep it from interference and suppression by an outside body."

Pearse's political development can best be summarised in the paradox I used in *Man Called Pearse*: he was always a moderate and always a revolutionary. It is not surprising that many independent judges take it for granted that Pearse to-day at the very least would be under the de Valera banner or that many resent, though any student of his writings or the historians of the future will not be so sure or so resentful, the argument that Pearse would have accepted the machinery and opportunities of the Irish Free State in 1922. Margaret Pearse, as is well known, eventually saw in Mr. de Valera the successor of Patrick Pearse. She would defend him from all criticisms and hand you his latest pamphlet and speak of him with affection and a deep look of distress would come into her eyes at any sharp examination of de Valera or his policy. On her death-bed, his was the last name she uttered. To the end she went her way even when she knew her stand endangered the one thing she still wanted

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to endure: the school which she continued to her death in April 1932. Her last years were serene enough. The Civil War left a deep mark on her. Although she could never descend to personal bitterness, she could be unjust to her political opponents, for she misjudged Michael Collins in 1922, and never forgave the executions of the Free State regime. She was even capable of wishing the return of the British Occupation as an alternative to the Irish Free State.

It was pathetic to see this noble woman after her sons had died and good to think she died at the moment of the triumph of de Valera. After 1916 some of us had expected to meet a broken woman, but a miracle had happened and the storm had passed in one short week balanced on the brink of madness. We thought our presence would remind her of the happy times with her sons, and this was true, for there is no doubt that the continuance of St. Enda's helped to soften her loss. When she saw the St. Enda boys marching down the road she saw again Pat and Willie at their head and thought of the school festivals and all the gay chronicle of St. Enda's before the Easter fires. She felt that some of the happiest world she had known still survived until beyond she would again be united to her sons. But there were festivals she could never attend, the great St. Enda's gathering on All Hallow's Eve where, in the old days, Pat and Willie had distributed gifts out of big white bags and recited *Shamus O'Brien* and *Napoleon's Farewell* in three short words after great preparation. Whenever she went abroad, and a pilgrimage to some Belgian shrine or a journey across the Atlantic were all one to her until the last, she visited all the St. Enda boys she could find and asked after them and their families and talked and listened to all the talk she could hear about the days before 1916. She was a born story-teller and a mimic. She would take off with

perfect good-nature all the idiosyncrasies of her friends and loved all the humours of Dublin, and she was hard to shock even when the vivid unexpurgated speech of Dublin fell on her ears.

"Children," said Margaret Pearse when she had had the worst of the argument with her own, "should obey their parents in everything—except in the matter of marriage." What memories she had about her own children! She shared in all their hopes and sorrows and went with them everywhere. She accompanied her daughter, Mary Bridget Pearse and Willie to Cork in 1911, with the Leinster Stage Society, a small amateur company of players which included Crawford Neil the poet, whose fine head I saw so often poised over the National Library counter and some very well-known Dublin players. The society had to its mind, though, alas! not to the minds of the good citizens of Cork, a generous and varied programme: dramatic versions from Dickens, Gaelic plays, heroic plays, peasant plays and a farce or two. It had taken the Opera House, and every day the Opera House door-keeper cheered the company for the small audiences thus: "It's all over the town that your show is a rotten show. The whole town knows it's a rotten show, man. You have to be very careful what you bring down here from Dublin or anywhere else. Why we can criticise the very choruses of operas, man." One paper said that the prompter's voice was more audible than the players and was not impressed. Mr. Fred Loco, the auburn and bustling stage-manager, used to look at the auditorium, and return to announce with gloom ever deeper and deeper: "There are five, six, seven, twenty people, apart from the journalists who are thirsty and angry." This was a pessimistic exaggeration, even if the Leinster Stage Society never set the Lee alight, a newspaper boy, a vendor of the evening *Echo*

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of Cork itself, refused a free pass in farmyard language and Fred Loco's suggestion to drown all the critics in porter was firmly rejected, and one player was dressed and hurried on to the stage by the frenzied efforts of the whole company one night after the curtain had gone up and full arrangements had been made to bluff through without him, leading figure in the piece and all as he was. Mrs. Pearse enjoyed all the ups and downs and a more kindly Cork as the company wandered off the boards and met the patriots and *litterati* of Cork, who turned up every night, and said all the good they could to the citizens in the daytime. Among these friends of the company were Daniel Corkery, Con O'Leary and Terence MacSwiney, who showed the Leinster Stage Society Cork from the Shandon Bells to the mental ferment in its clubs and societies all the world was to know less than ten years later. And Daniel Corkery talks much of his friend Terence MacSwiney, whose portrait is to hang on humble walls in India and Catalonia, whose death is to bring the Italian Chamber of Deputies to its feet in unanimous homage, Terence MacSwiney, a man tall, slight, pallid, with eyes of benign and smiling strength, "a white flame" Corkery calls him wise before the event, though he also chaffs Terry and all his band of poets for knowing Shelley better than the use of a spade or a saw and offers to teach them. And ten years later, Margaret Pearse again comes to Cork, with her two sons in the grave, and walked behind Bishops with their croziers through streets flowing with flowers, to lay the Lord Mayor of Cork in his resting place and listen to the final volley over his grave under the tall trees.

All her days she kept a great vigil. So serene and kindly was the face she turned to the world that people thought that she had been stunned or numbed or distracted. This was not so. The wound remained, and

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sometimes it opened with sharp pangs of loss. Once after 1916, she asked me to read to her Pearse's poem *The Mother*. She nodded her head and urged me on to read—smiling sadly:

*I do not grudge them: Lord, I do not grudge  
My two strong sons that I have seen go out  
To break their strength and die, they and a few,  
In bloody protest for a glorious thing.  
They shall be spoken of among their people,  
The generations shall remember them,  
And call them blessed!*

Margaret Pearse still nodded her head, but she sobbed and insisted on hearing the closing words, murmuring with unforgettable feeling: "Go on! Go on! How he knew, my God, how he knew!" And she was right, for the poem proceeds:

*But I will speak their names to my own heart  
In the long nights;  
The little names that were familiar once  
Round my dead hearth.  
Lord, thou art hard on mothers:  
We suffer in their coming and their going;  
And tho' I do not grudge them, I weary, weary  
Of the long sorrow—and yet I have my joy:  
My sons were faithful and they fought.*

Sometimes, Margaret Pearse told me then, the long sorrow came upon her with a terrible intensity as she walked the Dublin streets by herself. She would look round and see people looking at her for she had called out: "Pat and Willie! Pat and Willie!" And it was well for her peace of mind that she could rest sometimes in Cullenswood and the Hermitage and tell the tale of her sons. But even here she could be merry and laugh at herself, and say: "I went to the meeting and made a Pat and Willie speech. It's all I'm good for at such affairs."

Such was Margaret Pearse.

## NINE

AND then shadows of doom and disaster always darkened the St. Enda's and the Dublin of those days, and we spent our hours in gloom taking down the fiery speeches of a ghoulisn monomaniac who counted the minutes until he could offer up his fifty pupils on an altar to fierce old Gaelic gods and none other life or interest was there save that? A thunder of laughter comes rolling down the years and sunlight glitters on all the roofs of El Dorado and all the elms and beeches of the Hermitage nod in peace around the old grey house, but within there is life and mirth, and a red squirrel bounds across a woodland path and climbs a tree as a bell wakes fifty boys in the sunny dormitories and Pearse rapidly descends the three floors rousing laggards. On the rostrum he waits as the Study Hall fills and he recites the Rosary and an Irish Litany known to his saints centuries ago on lonely wave-lashed islets amid grey stone, and with a quick word has emptied the hall and seated his boys around the long tables of the wood and iron-roofed refectory and watched them amidst a terrific din of cups, plates and voices and marched them with another word into the classrooms beyond the glass-roofed quadrangle, where some fall out for the Science Hall and others into the spacious rooms whence soon comes a hum of study, with intervals, until another bell ends the school-day. There is a clash of hurleys and parties ramble through the woods even as far as the lake, where otters and rats creep and fight and many-coloured birds flit through the trees sloping over the winding walks. Sometimes in the

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summer there are open-air classes and Pearse holds a group of boys under his spell until a magic and angry bird more mighty than any headmaster arrives and swoops down to put to ignominious flight with strange cries from its scarlet and wrath-swollen gizzard all invaders of the small hilly green it regards as its own. Once Pearse held a raffle to raise funds for the school and saw an opportunity of ridding himself of this beloved but too militant turkey. He offered it as one of the prizes and it was duly won by a very learned man who waited in vain for the prize. When he complained, Pearse wrote to tell him that if he wanted his bird he would have to come out to Rathfarnham and capture it himself. Some sixth sense had told it that it was under banishment and its temper and speed increased amazingly. So the turkey lived with Pearse till it died, a despot to the end on its own hard-won green hillock. Birds and animals were favourites with Pearse. The cruelty and neglect of animals he sometimes met in his wanderings through the country and especially in the Gaelthacht distressed and puzzled him. He used to speak bitterly about this and say it was a stain on any Christian country and that the English practice in these matters was an example to Ireland. Once a favourite horse had to be done away with. His mother and sister came to the scene weeping bitterly, while Pearse went quickly away. Inside the Study Hall Willie waited, and quite ignorant of what was afoot behind the quadrangle sternly reproached some late-comers. "We were watching the horse being knackered, sir," they explained. Quite unmoved, Willie retorted: "Well, in future, boys, please remember that even if your own grandmother is being knackered, you have no right to ignore the bell!"

And then with his soft laugh Willie realised what he had said and was only too glad to hand over the Study to the grave Dr. Doody and go below to his brother in



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the little room down off the huge flagged kitchen. There Pearse often sat at a round oak table writing or drinking tea out of his big willow-pattern cup, for he had taken a vow only to drink one cup of tea and the vow had irked him until this great vessel slaked his thirst and soothed his conscience. Late at night he sometimes left his study and brooded by himself in this lower room over his Irish New Testament, his black gown wrapped round him. In these moods he was like some monk in his cell. He would remain silent for hours, lost in his thoughts and unconscious of all around him and all questions addressed to him. "Yes . . . yes," he would answer, "No . . . no," still dream-wrapped and devoid of any affectation or irritability. Two things always brought him out of his dreams with a smile: his brother crowing at him in their baby dialect or the entrance of those half-dozen senior students who also used this room, known to him as "The Dogs." With the Dogs he would enter into arguments and wax very positive, but endure contradiction very affably. All the Dogs were pupils of his from the first day and he enjoyed their gambols and pranks. With a grave expression he would listen to their often very personal discussions and frank criticisms of one another, always accompanied by the St. Enda nicknames: Spud and Yam and the Dog Himself and Hurricane Hal and Dinniper and the Bloody Man and the Beautiful and the Fat Rat and Napper Tandy. Willie told his brother on the quiet the scandalous chronicle of the last when he left St. Enda's and eventually became a most staid and respectable doctor: it could not be told to Pearse directly by the Dogs, for there were certain moral questions involved which would have embarrassed Pearse to hear direct, but when the merry tale was conveyed to him via Willie by the Dogs, he could laugh without mounting his rostrum. Napper Tandy himself excused his grim

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humour and erratic temperament by a French drop in his blood and his upbringing by a cruel uncle who had hit him from time to time with an iron bar, growling the only words Napper Tandy had ever heard from him: "Blast you, be easy!" When he became a medical, Napper Tandy was generally hard up and once came out to the Dogs asking them for some books which he could sell to George Webb on the quays. They gave him some Latin grammars and dog-eared histories and a Euclid without much hope that this would relieve him. They anticipated George would say the same words as he had said when these books had once before been offered to him by themselves: "No use. No demand for them books. Piles of them inside." And hang-dog, ruffianly assistants had agreed with George. There was no place for such wares in that disordered shop with groaning shelves and piles of books all over the floor and no system or catalogue but the memories of George and his gruff hirelings. But Napper Tandy asked for a large bag to carry the books and said: "Never venture, never win, by Jasus!" Saddened by his empty pockets the Dogs accompanied him to the quays and waited outside. Fifteen minutes passed and Napper Tandy came out, swinging an empty bag and tossing half-crowns in the air. He asked the Dogs to come to dinner that very evening in the Red Bank Restaurant and have what they pleased at his expense. It appears that George was very busy when Napper Tandy arrived. Leaving him to haggle with the sellers of books worse than his own, Napper Tandy carefully left the books he had brought in a dark corner and filled the bag with the pick of the shelves which he sold to George at a handsome price. Napper Tandy also hated landladies, for he was fastidious about dust and diet: in his first year as a medical he had twenty-six landladies, and so violent were his leave-

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takings that his belongings were generally lowered out the windows to him in the dead of night. Once he was invited to spend a night in a friend's digs and given the key and told to make himself at home any hour after midnight, but not to disturb poor So-and-so in the first room on the left third landing. Naturally after midnight Napper Tandy hurled open the door of the first room on the third landing, for he and poor So-and-so never hit it off, and with a wild: "Blast you, how are you!" dived boots and all into bed on top of poor So-and-so. There was a wild female shriek and Napper Tandy flew, for he knew the voice too well: that of his nineteenth landlady, an ancient dame of blistering tongue and hefty arm, and lo! even as he went there was a volley of language and a crash of crockery behind him. Napper Tandy hated women and policemen and drank many toasts at St. Enda merry-makings to the confusion of both. He used to scorch past a prowling policeman at Terenure without a light, sending blood-curdling whoops of defiance at this policeman who was notorious for capturing cyclists. Once Napper Tandy left a bit of his coat with the constable and told him vigorously that in birth and speech he wasn't far from the bog. "So you are from the West, yourself?" said the policeman, recognising the accent of his home town. From that out there was peace between them.

If Napper Tandy was a determined misogynist, not so with the Beautiful, who shared a small room with Dinniper at the top of the house. The Beautiful deserved his name, and his heart was pierced by an arrow from the eyes of some wonderful girl once every month, and at the end of the month all was over and his life was blasted; and Dinniper, a wild-haired youth of impetuous temper and lurid language, had to console the Beautiful, and did so with resignation, for he knew by experience that on the

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first of the month the Beautiful's heart would be pierced again and that at the end of the month again the Beautiful would lie back on his bed with mournful eyes and sing dolefully "O Jerusalem," and this was the end of the reigning, heartless, false one. Other eyes were raised in homage to the Beautiful through all these reigns, and the Beautiful's nerves were so much affected at all the hearts he was breaking that he took poor Dinniper out under a bush and brooded in silence, and then said sadly: "It's a curse to be good-looking!" Dinniper annoyed him much by arguing with him furiously on the question of the eternity of hell and hurling heresies at him nightly and reading all sorts of books at him until the Beautiful told him he was one of those persons his Big Brother talked about: intellectual snobs who would find their mistakes one day when demons poked their backsides with red-hot forks through flaming walls twelve feet thick, whereupon Dinniper forsook argument and descended to personal abuse and reached for a blackthorn and made a swipe at the wall and just missed the Beautiful, but left a mark on that wall to be seen in St. Enda's to this day in spite of all painters and others who have since laboured to remove it. Next morning the Beautiful and Dinniper were horrified when a red-haired youth, who slept the other side of the wall, approached them and told them that he had listened to their arguments about hell for a month and he sided with Dinniper. The Beautiful appealed to Dinniper whether there was or was not a hell, and whether or not their nightly arguments were only intended to clarify their minds like the custom at Maynooth of holding debates presided over by Bishops and Cardinals and defying all the world to come and reason out the case. Dinniper rose to the occasion and said of course there was a hell, but the red-haired youth looked very sad to hear that.

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Dinniper and the Beautiful had at that time a feud with Napper Tandy and the Bloody Man. They were so foolish as to let Napper Tandy know that they were shocked to hear Elizabethan language, and Napper Tandy gave them their fill thereof and character sketches of themselves for a pair of Holy Willies, and quoted the Bible and Shakespeare and the classics and his uncle, who walloped him with the iron bar until they groaned and salted his tea when he wasn't looking, but Napper Tandy made such realistic remarks about the meals for a month afterwards that their appetites left them even as Napper Tandy wolfed down all placed before him, a mighty trencherman, his long nose gleaming with joy and cheeks flaming as he barked hunger-dealing comments at them.

The feud with the Bloody Man—for this was his adjective, and hence his name in the days before this word had lost its sting—arose out of his inordinate conceit over his knowledge of Greek and his contempt as an Irish speaker for all the Irish of Dinniper and the Beautiful and his very glum aspect and his sardonic remarks. Dinniper and the Beautiful stood this far longer than they should have. But when they had shut down their arguments on theology to preserve the red-haired youth from troubling himself with problems unsuited to his years, they became men of action and raided the hen-roosts of St. Enda's and procured a noble White Cock with a mighty crow and placed him in a box and arranged him neatly on the bed of the Bloody Man in the hope that the bird would escape and elude the Bloody Man and give him something more to think about than sleep, and leave him exposed to the gibes of Yam and Hurricane Hal. But as they turned to steal away, the Bloody Man came through the door with the adjectives for which he was nicknamed and hurled the White Cock

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through the window and grappled with Dinniper, who was happily armed with his blackthorn. Dinniper bears the marks of that combat to this day, for the Bloody Man caught hold of the blackthorn and gave his hand a twist he remembered. Then Miss Margaret Pearse arrived and told them they were a pack of children and not to be waking up the younger ones, and for a month afterwards disgusted Dinniper and the Beautiful by all the compliments she paid the Bloody Man for taking it all so nicely. The hypocrite had put on his best smile and shelved his adjectives and said not to mind, and never thought at all of the visit that Dinniper had to pay the doctor to get his hand put right, though he recalled the few cracks of the blackthorn and the boot the Beautiful gave him as battle ebbed and flowed and the White Cock crew dolefully outside in the garden. He mended his manners after that and settled down, and lives in a handsome mansion outside Dublin, and is famous as one who cares for the ills and ailments of horses and dogs and cattle. Does the White Cock never haunt him?

Sometimes the Fat Rat (who was a student of history and given to winning scholarships and medals, and became a lawyer in the end) took all the Dogs out to his family farm, and his brother, the Gulkin, drove the car at full speed, hooting loudly to drown the laughter of the Fat Rat and Yam and Hurricane Hal and Dinniper and the Bloody Man and Napper Tandy, who by the way was responsible for calling the Fat Rat the Fat Rat, since there was no rhyme nor reason in the noun, though there was a plausible excuse for the adjective. And out on the farm the Dogs and the Gulkin talked much of politics, and this topic too was much in the conversation when they went out to tea with Hurricane Hal on Sunday evenings, and Hurricane Hal's father, irreverently known to them as the Rajah, spoke to them wisely in Irish and

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English and played chess with them, and the family gathered round and watched the tight battles of the Rajah and the Dogs; but try as they would they never check-mated him, and knew when they captured his Queen that he would have them tied up in two moves or so with a flap of his hand and a twinkle of his eye. Then there would be the music of harps and all the arguments that Ireland heard afterwards from the platforms and manifestos of Sinn Fein, and many of those who made and drafted them sat under the Rajah's roof and much past history the Dogs heard before they made a bolt for the Rathfarnham tram.

It was Yam who was keenest on politics, and all for pikes and guns, as befitted one whose father had taken part in many revolutions in a far land. The Dogs read all the literature of Sinn Fein and held many arguments with the Dog Himself and Yam and Dinniper on the one side and the Fat Rat and the Bloody Man and Napper Tandy on the other. Nothing would do Dinniper but he must go Labour and Socialist, and though Yam had a farm, Dinniper nearly converted him, to the disgust of Napper Tandy, who said he wasn't going to be said by a lot of bowsies and gang of old working-men led by a fire-brand the like of Jem Larkin, whose paper Dinniper read regularly. Then Napper Tandy read Larkin's paper and somersaulted, for he liked the style, especially when he saw the look of horror on the Beautiful's face. Nothing would do Dinniper but to start writing for Larkin himself, and I tell you he got a flea in his ear when he sailed in first with an article to tell the world what patriotism was and why he was a patriot. This was the kind of stuff he reeled off, for I declare to God he took himself very seriously, asking the Fat Rat whether this word would do and what year did So-and-so say this and wasn't this a good point; and then the Fat Rat would talk the head

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off him, for the Fat Rat was studying political economy under Father Tom Finlay in the National just then, and he gave Dinniper a few nuts to crack with his wild talk about Socialism, and kept Yam on the straight path, for Dinniper had him loaded up with pamphlets and sometimes Dinniper and Napper Tandy broke up all arguments by chasing the Fat Rat down the stairs and miles up the road, though to see them at meals in the refectory you'd think butter wouldn't melt in their mouths. Hammer and tongs Dinniper and a lad named "O'F" were at it in Larkin's paper about Labour and Nationalism, and Dinniper was on his high horse, saying he wasn't the son of a shopkeeper or a self-sufficient youth, and telling his opponent who'd told him to play marbles and learn the elements of the question in dispute before he'd cough up any more high-falutin' twaddle about the ethics of the Lord knows what, telling his opponent anyway to propagate no more backlane English and pigsty morality and learn what he was talking about before he started, and then Jem Larkin put the tin lid on the pair of them; but it was a gas turn while it lasted, and Pearse laughed at Dinniper and told him an odd thing or two when O'F winded him with another hefty one on the button. . . . But when the Big Strike came Dinniper broke out again and wrote yards and yards and yards more under another of his fancy pen-names, sometimes quoting Swinburne, but sometimes using such violent language that Jem Larkin told him that he was descending into vulgarity and to stick to his books. Anyway, Yam and Dinniper couldn't talk five minutes without bringing Dublin Castle in and vowing they'd hoist a green flag on top of it; and the Dog Himself was nearly as bad, and the three of them got vexed one night and, in spite of all the Fat Rat could say, nothing would suit them but march down town and raise blue murder in a picture-house near O'Connell



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Bridge because there was a film being shown to give a fillip to recruiting for the Army, and they booed and hissed and got into handgrips with the attendants with the aid of a lot of madcaps as bad as themselves, and before you could cry crack the audience was yelling: "Take the bloody thing off! We don't want any so-and-so so-and-so in this so-and-so city! Give us back our money or let us enjoy ourselves!" And Hurricane Hal had a clasp-knife handy when a Tommy started to climb over the seats and threatened to knock the stuffing out of him, but the manager rushed in and managed to pacify the lot of them, and there was a question asked in the House of Commons by some Tory die-hard, and Mr. Birrell got up and said he understood that some irresponsible and unrepresentative elements had booed a picture, but there was nothing to it and every precaution had been taken to prevent the recurrence of similar demonstrations which he was satisfied did not reveal the real sentiments of the Irish people. He never said a truer word, for the Fat Rat read them all a lecture and Miss Pearse joined in and told them to stick to their studies and not make ejots of themselves. Gob, you'd think they were Wolfe Tones, the airs they gave themselves. But that didn't put an end to their foolishness, for the next thing Dinniper got hold of a miniature rifle and began to learn to shoot, and Yam ditto and the Dog and the Joyso Baby and his pal, Frank. And of course when Dinniper got hold of a gun he realised that Napper Tandy was a very fine moving target, so one fine afternoon when Napper Tandy made a rude remark to him as Napper Tandy and the Fat Rat were strolling up and down the walk just in front of the Hermitage, and Dinniper was cleaning his weapon in the top front room next door to Pearse's room, Dinniper let bang and bang and bang and bang and Napper Tandy couldn't be seen for dust, but as he had to pass the windows

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Dinniper refused to cease fire until he withdrew his remarks. Napper Tandy swore that the bullets whizzed round his head, but Dinniper was not quite so mad as all that, but had kept firing at a bush in front of him straight ahead while his target danced and shouted to his left and Dinniper watched the dust dancing up in front of the bush. Dinniper was not encouraged to seek movable targets after that: they took the gun off him, and only let him blaze away twice a week. They were mad enough, the whole crowd of them, until Sla arrived as Science master and the Yank joined them. Then they went to the devil altogether. All this time the Dogs were attending the National and every morning they drove down with Peadar, Micheál's brother, down to the tram start behind the brown horse. They all joined the Volunteers in due course and had the time of their lives between the lectures of the professors and their nights in fields and mills, and sang a song that they would live before they died; but that's enough about the Dogs for the present, except to say that they all grew up and became so respectable, except perhaps Dinniper, that nowadays you wouldn't know them for the mad young fellows that once satisfied Mr. Birrell that they were unrepresentative of the real sentiments of the Irish people and who led Patrick Pearse astray with their wild talk and carryings on.

Always in St. Enda's there had been a dramatic tradition. In earlier pages here there has been little mention of this; it can be read in old copies of *An Macaomh* (The Youth) or in the portions of that which Pearse had reprinted in *The Story of a Success*. All Pearse's personality went into these plays and pageants, and he wrote his playlets, *The King* and *Iosagan* and *The Master* and his Cuchulainn Pageant and his Passion Play with an eye of the individual characters of his pupils. And sometimes a word slipped from him as he watched the re-

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hearsals which showed an insight into all the weaknesses and strength of his pupils. In his beginnings at Cullenswood House before his first dream faded and St. Enda's was the one main interest of his life, these plays were a central item on the programme, and he had the help of Padraic Colum who wrote *The Destruction of the Hostel*, ransacking old translations of Irish tales to find sea-raiders and sword-girt heroes, and Standish O'Grady who gave him his *Coming of Fionn* and superintended the rehearsals, and W. B. Yeats who produced a play of Tagore's at the Abbey along with one of Pearse's in aid of the school. Pearse took much pride in his players whether he saw them in their hero-garb in Cullenswood's pleasant field or on the Abbey stage or in the small theatre he built on occasion in Cullenswood. Thomas MacDonagh was his stage-manager, the most exacting and competent Bully of a stage-manager imaginable, reducing stolid youth to the verge of tears and more excitable youths to rage, going his way genially insistent and implacable. The curtain rises and Thomas watches, unless he is acting himself. The curtain falls and Thomas leads or shares the applause and then wears sackcloth and ashes. He does a tremendous penance for his criticisms, apologising, eulogising and taking it all back and calling himself all the names he can think of with a wave of his flowing tie and sweeping gestures. He has the air of some saint lamenting the sins of his youth, a twinkle in his eye and capable of a gentle leg-pull—assuming we all know that fancy must roam betimes. Off he goes in his kilt with green brath floating to see a friend home near midnight, to his friend's door, back again with his friend to his own and back again. . . . When Thomas goes to lecture in the National University Willie Pearse takes his place as stage-manager and always runs the school concerts with always a scene from Shakespeare, where Pearse

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will recite Mark Antony's oration with tremendous fire. Through a Wicklow glen the brothers lead their school excursions or to Howth with Thomas on that great day when we all had such splendid thirsts and hungers that milk and food gave out and a wild-eyed virago appeared at the door, shouting: "If yiz want more, then begod, yiz'll have to pay for it," and Pearse said haughtily there was no question that she would and she retired amidst tremendous cheering and a bow from Thomas, who insisted that every drop of milk should be drained from the jugs and every plate cleared as a reproof for this attempted browbeating and actual slander. Through Ireland went the hurling and football teams of St. Enda's, carrying all championships of Dublin and Leinster before them, and whenever the St. Enda team had a temporary reverse Pearse looked sad and shook his head, and the Lord help the next team St. Enda's met.

Sometimes I sat in his study, for I became his secretary in intervals of teachings until I began to attend the lectures at the National. There he would open his mind as he wrestled with the problems of his soul, the debts and bills, an article for some country paper boosting the school. Sometimes I wrote these articles, but I enjoyed it more when Pearse wrote and paused with a smile and a blush after the compliments he had just paid himself. "The distinguished Headmaster of St. Enda's," he would write and then shake with laughter, and gather a few more. The boys came to him with all their own troubles, and so deep was his hold over them that they always told him the truth, and he found by experience he could always trust them. The burden of the school irked him sometimes. "Wouldn't it be a grand thing," he said once with a sigh, "to have no ambition whatsoever, and be a clerk with £2 a week? Yes, I should enjoy that, no worries, and ease among my books." He loved his books: that

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much-read edition of the *Cattle Spoil of Cuailgne* and his many editions of Shakespeare, all of which he had watched in the booksellers' windows, nobly renounced, entered, fingered, steeled himself, fled whole streets away, lingered, wavered, turned back and purchased, radiant and ashamed until he saw the next. Sometimes his pride broke out in these words: "If I don't save the school, I won't walk round Dublin to be pointed out as the man who founded it and failed: no, I shall go to America and work until I have paid off the last penny of debt." Once he went so far as to say: "I think I will be a Socialist, for the rich have failed me!" This, however, was a bitter jest, since he regarded Socialism with suspicion, although he said the usual attacks on it in Ireland on religious grounds were untenable. The scholar never obscured the talker: he had his ideas all clear and well arranged. He had a jesting, fantastic way of weaving all sorts of arguments, and these generally finished as a monologue. He would defy you to prove that fairies never danced round toadstools in the moonlight or revel in slang, in reminiscences for hours. He would sketch a plan for a Gaelic Empire or consider fasting on the doorsteps of some wealthy Dubliner until the school was endowed or imagine himself as the first Irish Minister of Education addressing the representatives of the teachers: "Now, gentlemen, the very first thing to be done before we discuss these other matters is to double, treble all your salaries!" He played with the idea of collecting the most positive statements and prophecies of Arthur Griffith, Hilaire Belloc and Bulmer Hobson, and disproving them all beyond yea or nay.

As 1912 went by Pearse's thoughts took on a more militant tinge, although his greatest school crisis and the failure of *An Barr Buadh* had somewhat chastened him. His heart was always with the rising militant national

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movements; even when he laughed at some of their manifestations or blamed them he respected the ideal behind them all. It may or may not be true to suggest, as Dennis Gwynn suggests, that without Pearse "the miscellaneous collection of intellectuals turned largely under his inspiration into Irish Volunteers, of newspaper boys turned into boy scouts by Countess Marcievicz, and of dock labourers turned into a Citizen Army by James Connolly, who between them composed the small force necessary to carry out the *coup d'état*, would never have been got together or inspired with a single purpose."<sup>1</sup> It is certainly untrue to claim, as Gwynn proceeds to claim, that Pearse, "who had founded an Irish-speaking secondary school some eight years previously had developed it into a more or less precariously established institution, and deliberately used it as an instrument to provide himself with the nucleus of a band of young politicians who would follow him to the scaffold as the political successor of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet." Dennis Gwynn's total lack of humour, political prepossessions and post-war disillusion colour his otherwise living portrait of Pearse, whom he regarded more truly when he was in actual touch with Pearse in Cullenswood House. He does in this very sketch bring to life Pearse suddenly lighted by a vision of the day he alone in Ireland foresaw: "I remember how he used to become eloquent with the extraordinary eloquence he often developed in long conversations about the necessity of rousing the country from lethargy. He used to recur constantly to the assertion that the people had lost their souls and were being vulgarised, commercialised, anxious only to imitate the material prosperity of England. . . . After a time these ideas of his took more definite shape and he used to tell every one he met that there could be no hope for

<sup>1</sup> *Dublin Review*, January-February-March, 1923.

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Ireland until there had been actual bloodshed. We were all accustomed to hearing this sort of talk from him, but I remember particularly one day at Rathfarnham when he first spoke to me about the necessity of an actual rebellion. I think I replied with some banal remark about one British battleship being able to blow the whole of Dublin to atoms. He was seldom violent in his gestures, but I can still see him bringing down his clenched fist heavily on the table where we were sitting and declaring: 'I would rather see all Dublin in ruins than that we should go on living as we are at present.' I was startled by his vehemence and often remembered his words afterwards. I recalled them with amazement when, four years later in England, I read the first bewildering reports of the Dublin Rising and realised that his life's ambition had been fulfilled."

It was indeed impossible to know Pearse and remain in ignorance of how vivid and ever-present was his dream and aim of revolution, especially as Dennis Gwynn notes in the *Hermitage*. He was a good listener, but when roused the conversation ended as a monologue which sounded very like one of speeches, although there was more humour. One such monologue, punctuated by questions from Dennis Gwynn and myself about the year 1912, hums faintly in my ears, perhaps because it is characteristic, of two sides of Pearse, that fire beneath and that detachment above the fire. Pearse sits at the table and raps it from time to time to mark his points and again looks away towards the summer evening darkening the trees in the grounds beyond the great windows. King Charles's head is duly flourished to the audience with resonant comment: "Parliament is the brain of England, but behind the Parliament is the armed force which executes the will of that brain. Whenever England goes forward, Ireland falls back" and so on.

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For all I know Pearse might then have banged the table and with face alight predicted his insurrection. I forget, but other phrases rise from the memory and these phrases are characteristic of another Pearse, the Pearse who would tell you that an insurrection could only be undertaken in the case of a foreign war, and add with a dry smile: "A poor prospect when you think of it, isn't it? We could march on Dublin Castle, but in twelve hours the British Fleet would be shelling Dublin. Again think of those who might be drawn into such an enterprise: myself, Griffith and Larkin perhaps, this man and that man, all distrustful of one another." And with his dry smile Pearse would fall silent. But these faint phrases show another Pearse in that summer of 1912, when Home Rule seemed still a live issue: "Does Carson believe what he says? Hardly, he's a clever ex-Dublin lawyer who must know he is talking nonsense. . . . After all, he has lived here! Sinn Fein? The Sinn Fein movement made a lot of noise some years ago, but is now on the wane, thanks to Griffith's tactics. His lack of policy and carping comments have driven away the best elements of the Irish Party. But Griffith's last pamphlet, *The Home Rule Bill Examined*, has somewhat redeemed him: it proves he has not lost altogether the capacity for constructive criticism. . . . His arch-critic is Sheehy-Skeffington, a man of a type common in England but rare in Ireland. He has a thousand principles, from pacifism and woman's suffrage to wearing knickerbockers, and would die at the stake for the least of them, even his right to wear knickerbockers. He is a most lovable man and always very courteous, never more so than when he meets me and explains that the Gaelic League and the Irish language are quite dead, or, at any rate, all humbug." Pearse would dash off a judgment like that for the asking. He had no malice even towards those who made bitter personal



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attacks on himself. When he founded the *Barr Buadh* in a mad and inspired mood some gutter journalist in the Larkinite camp wrote a note insinuating that Pearse was really wirepulling for the job of Minister of Education under a Home Rule Parliament. Pearse gasped, and said to me and Willie: "Did you ever hear such a thing?" Willie said that after all there were people capable of such wiles but Pearse remained sad at the suggestion that there should be villany like that in the world. Finally, both Willie and I persuaded him that such villany was possible, and he burst out laughing, for he remembered that he was fighting for the life of his school and that it was putting him to sore straits to pay the printer's bill. Dennis Gwynn, although he told Pearse to his face in public that his one ambition was to end in the dock and on the scaffold, was devoted to Pearse. Once Dr. Mahaffy wrote a famous letter banning the celebration of the Thomas Davis centenary by Trinity College Gaelic Society on the grounds that "a man called Pearse" had been invited to speak. This was during the war before Gwynn himself had joined the army. He organised a meeting of National University students to be addressed by Pearse and W. B. Yeats and Professor T. M. Kettle, at that time a very prominent recruiting agent on platforms in his khaki uniform. The meeting was very lively. A working man cursed the opening speakers for their moderation: "The shade of Mahaffy is over ye all. Put more life into it!" The door was thrown open and Professor Kettle arrived gloriously drunk. He opened his speech with a glare at Pearse and hammered the table and said he would uphold free speech even for his personal enemies, and this with another blow on the table and another glare at Pearse. Yeats rose and read Thomas Davis's *Lament for Owen Roe*, his wonderful voice filling the room like a magic tempest:

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*Wail, wail him through the island! Weep, weep for our pride!  
Would that on the battle-field our gallant chief had died!  
Weep the victor of Beinn Burb—weep him, young men and old!  
Weep for him, ye women—your Beautiful lies cold!*

*We thought you would not die—we were sure you would not go,  
And leave us in our utmost need to Cromwell's cruel blow—  
Sheep without a shepherd, when the snow shuts out the sky—  
Oh, why did you leave us, Owen? Why did you die?*

Then Yeats made a short speech saying he knew nothing about politics or was not much interested in them just then, and wrapped a delicate reproof to Dr. Mahaffy in some phrase from a Greek tale about some sage who would not have alluded to some poet by professing a dislike to hear a poet termed a man called so-and-so. But he would like to hear Mr. Pearse on Davis, and with a phrase or two more about Davis himself, Yeats sat down gracefully. Pearse made a long comparison between those who prefer the fiery Mitchel to the mild Davis, or those who preferred the Gospel of St. John to the Gospel of St. Luke. At this point the working man rose once more, having recovered his good humour and pointed at Kettle with the question: "Eh, Mr. Pearse, and what about the Gospel according to St. Thomas?" Afterwards Kettle and the crowd had some sharp exchanges. This distressed Pearse, who shook his head afterwards and said Kettle had made a bad job of it with the crowd. The attack on himself passed him by. He said: "If Stephen Gwynn had been there instead of Kettle he would have put up a case for himself!"

All roads led to the attack on Dublin Castle with Pearse. Especially in the war years. "We must strike," he would say. "After all our marchings and speeches what else can we do? Would any one ever listen to our oratory again if we let this chance pass?" But there

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was in this very open profession of his aims—too open some thought—nothing of the bloodthirsty fanatic. There was a sadness about him, and he never quite faced the horrors of warfare with an easy mind. The sinking of the *Lusitania* saddened him, while at first he refused to believe the Germans were using poison-gas. When pupils of his joined the British Army he shook his head even more sadly and agreed with MacDonagh's breezy: "Now begad, that's consistent!" But has Pearse not written: "One does not want to make each of one's pupils a replica of one's self (God forbid!), holding the self-same opinions, prejudices, likes, illusions . . . because for every soul there is a perfection meant for it alone, and which it alone is capable of attaining."

Through the St. Enda's of those years passed many famous Irishmen who addressed the boys in the evenings when Pearse presided at a lecture or a debate, Padraic Colum, Bulmer Hobson and Dr. Douglas Hyde and Major MacBride. Sometimes the Dogs themselves mounted the platform and sometimes there was a school vote on some burning internal question as games. Sometimes there was drill in the evenings and one drill instructor may end this section for as Con Colbert came to the Hermitage Pearse had entered on his last phase. Excited in the Study Hall Colbert stands, eyes smouldering, taut in his green jersey as he drills the boys. Lithe and smiling he puts them through drills and exercise with sword-sticks and teaches them the semaphore alphabet and tells them he knows every part of all makes of guns. They like him, but his enthusiasm puzzles them and they hardly understand one night his outburst that any one who doesn't want these drills and fencings and marchings needn't bother about them, but when they think a bit and are older they'll find these bits of knowledge very handy if they want to live in Ireland at all. This awakes the

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pride of the wits of St. Enda's who say that it's all very well for Pete (Pearse) to do the Robert Emmet act, but they won't have outsiders telling them what's what. And Colbert laughs at them and goes out to his little tent in the long field, and sometimes Liam Mellows comes to join him in his small tent with greenery for a bed and others of the Fianna come and they sing songs around the small fire.

And then Dinniper and the Yam and the Dog Himself got very thick with Colbert and Liam, although the Fat Rat and Napper Tandy and the Bloody Man would not have anything to do with their carryings on, but Hurricane Hal was as bad as the rest. Nothing would do them but behind Pete's back and all when he thought they were studying, but they went the whole hog and came in touch with the reorganised Irish Republican Brotherhood and joined it and drilled in a city hall and scraped all the money they could together to buy guns. But just as that happened the Big Strike loomed ahead, yet not before the Pearse brothers thought Colbert was the reincarnation of Napoleon. At the Saint Enda's Fête in Jones' Road the bold Colbert had a whole army ready to march and countermarch, of heroes he had picked up in Dublin, for Pearse's pageants. "They were like a pair of children," said Colbert to Dinniper. "Why don't they smell a rat?" And Hurricane Hal and the Dog Himself and Yam laughed, for Colbert had drilled them all for months, down in the city hall, and the Bloody Man was the only one who hit the nail square on the head when he said: "Hum, there are some Fenians in this house all right, but if you and Willie and Pete are going to start a revolution, I get off there!"

## TEN



IT was in the summer of Nineteen Thirteen that arms first glittered in the dark depths of Dublin. Away in the North the Orangemen marched and countermarched, and Lord Birkenhead to be said that the Irish did not care enough about Home Rule to fight for it, and the phrase "Civil War" became more and more familiar in the headlines of the papers, and Pearse said in the hall of the Hermitage that the best of the lot of them was Carson whether he believed what he said or not, and the only way to save Home Rule was to shoot him, but that was a weapon no one should use, and the Orangemen had guts anyway. Suddenly while Pearse and his companions began to think that the time had come for a revival of the Volunteers of Grattan's time as a reply to the North-East, and indeed something more, another war flamed up in the streets of Dublin, and twenty thousand men were locked out with Jim Larkin and James Connolly as leaders in their battle for the right to belong to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. Through the grey and fetid tenements went new-found Hope with tightened belt against the world it knew. In the streets the children sang:

*It's a wrong thing to crush the workers,  
It's a wrong thing to do,*

Or:

*Bring your own bread and butter,  
Bring your own tea and sugar,  
And Join Jim Larkin's Union.*

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Every night a window was shoved up in front of Liberty Hall down by the Custom House and Jim Larkin's lined and powerful face appeared to be followed by an address on the Strike and the history of the world in general in language borrowed from the Bible, William Shakespeare and others. Sometimes Jim gave a temperance lecture, for on this in drink Jim was strong. The story went—and all the extensive Larkin mythology has Ben Trovato for author—that he had founded his union with his bare fists in its beginnings, accosting sturdy labourers on the quays with an invitation to join his union or fight him on the spot on condition that any loser should at once take his card in the new union. *Soon between his fists and his tongue Jim had a big* union and there was no need to fight for his membership in that sense any more. Then he went all out for temperance. No one on earth could bring Jim into a pub, not even when inside waited a sympathiser ready to hand out fifty pounds to bail out one of Larkin's men, the sympathiser must come out of that pub or he could keep his money. Jim now fought for temperance and betimes threw inebriated backsliders down the steps of his headquarters at Liberty Hall with a fierce: "You hog, remember your wife and children and don't come back here until you are a man and not a porter-swilling beast." And the moral lesson behind this had gone home, for one thus treated had risen from the cobblestones and shouted at Jim Larkin's retreating back: "There goes the greatest bloody man since O'Connell!" That was always Jim's way at meetings: sharp and personal as at the anti-war demonstration in an English city when Jim had quoted Shaw's that at the word of command any soldier would shoot his mother, saying: "Serve the old girl right, God save the King!" A man in the audience cried out: "Hear, hear!" With one

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bound Jim leaped from the platform and pursued him from bench to bench, caught him, held him high in the air with one hand and threw him down the stairs into the arms of the police. Then Jim with indignation on his face went slowly back to the platform, looking from right to left and asking grimly: "Before I resume my speech, is there any other man here who would like to shoot his mother?" There wasn't.

Jim Larkin's speeches have never been collected, which is a pity, for no such speeches have ever been delivered in any city before or since. Here are specimens culled at intervals throughout his career until now, and in similar strains he harangued and held the Dublin workers of 1913:

"We are reluctantly compelled to state that there is a want of decency amongst a number of our public representatives; but degraded as some of our members have sunk politically they have not reached the level of the gentlemen(!) who have opened the eyes of the thinking workers not only of this country but who have at long last exposed to the gaze of the civilised world the kind of brutes who masquerade as gentlemen in the political whirlpool at Westminster. The orang-utan in the Zoo could not do worse nor act in a more degraded and monkey-like fashion than the Laws, Banburys and M'Neils did during the debate last Wednesday night. Argument is lost on them; reason they never possessed; common decency is an unknown quantity with them. These be your gods, you common, hard-working people; these are the objects you place your confidence in—baboons whose conduct, we repeat, would disgrace the denizens of the cages located in the Zoo. . . . A class war, yes, my friends, there is a class war. The lowest and most degraded class in these islands are insulting

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the intelligence of the class who are foolish enough to allow these missing links to prove Darwin's position."<sup>1</sup>

Twelve years later, Jim Larkin on his return to Dublin had not lost his style after his years in an American prison:

"We arrived in Westland Row, Dublin, on April 30 (1923), and since then life has been one long sweet song. . . . We found the country torn with fratricidal strife. The Stag and the Stool Pigeon, male and female, polluted public life by their presence, an armed despotism ruled ruthlessly. Murder was rampant. . . . A nation bankrupt in manners and morals; words had no meaning or application. The sycophant who held His Majesty's commission would bleat of his adherence to Republican principles over the grave of a Pearse or attend a military Mass in honour of a revolutionary mass-leader such as Connolly and then within the hour unctuously sign the death-warrant of a Republican. . . . A dozen would-be Mussolinis stood on the high places and issued their edicts. Lay theologians were as plentiful as mushrooms. . . . The Press of the country was the hired prostitute as always of the finance-capitalists, foreign and native. . . . The American dollar had brought the virus of commercialism into the Temple of Truth and the flame of wrath that in the dead gone years had shamed into silence the apologists of wrongdoing or seared the soul of the oppressor with a phrase had smouldered and almost died out. When the poets of a nation become business men seeking safety, ease of body, peace of mind and a balance at the bank, matters are in a parlous condition, and still we have not plumbed the depths. . . . We demanded in tones that were heard: *PEACE*. . . . We pause to say this, our determination and resolve:

<sup>1</sup> *Irish Worker*, 16th November 1912.



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so long as life vibrates through this our frame, we will never compromise with one of these infamous creatures (official Labour is here alluded to) who have trafficked in the phrases written and the sacrifices made in life and death of a comrade (Connolly, whose bitter private opinion of Larkin official Labour had just then published to the world: "He must rule or will not work. . . . He is consumed with jealousy and hatred of any one who will not cringe to him and beslave him all over") whose work some of these creatures utilised in life and now blaspheme his name in death. . . . OUR RESOLUTION, 1924, No Compromise, Truth, Moral Honesty, Class Solidarity."<sup>1</sup>

The compiler must pause to remark that something is wanting from these extracts: the background of seriousness behind Larkin at his best, the murmurs of admiration and confidence that arose from his simple and unlettered hearers who felt rightly that here was their champion, one who could speak for them in the gate with their enemies and shatter with a lyrical scurrility all the cant and humbug of the comfortable Dubliners and Nationalist doctrinaires alike. Sometimes from Larkin's speeches flashed a simple and beautiful phrase; not in vain had he gone to William Shakespeare and Francis Thompson and Walt Whitman, and these poets he would quote in Trafalgar Square or Cork or Dublin with equal confidence, never afraid to break into song on occasion. "Boys," he would tell a listening crowd, "Like Kathleen Ni Houlihan (and this allegorical figure of Ireland would come into all Jim's speeches all wrapped with loving phrases, so glowing that an English admirer once turned round at a meeting to his equally puritanical Socialist pal beside him, and said: 'Who's this Kathleen

<sup>1</sup> *Irish Worker*, 5th January 1924.

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he keeps dragging in? I never thought old Jim was that sort of man!') our stricken love, our lost one who mourns her four green fields in the hands of the stranger, like her we have a hard and stoney way to travel. Let not our bowelless masters provoke us before the appointed hour. Moderation is our watchword. And now, I'll sing the *Rising of the Moon!* "

And that Apostle of Moderation would sing lustily:

*Beside the singing river, a dark mass of men was seen,  
High above their shining weapons hung their own beloved green.  
Death to every foe and traitor, whistle up the marching tune,  
For our pikes must be together at the Rising of the Moon.*

In his pioneer days in Dublin, Larkin was invited to tea at the Viceregal Lodge and reasoned with by Lord Aberdeen, who had been impressed by his eloquence. This was Larkin's vivid account of the argument at the tea-party: "'Damn it all, Jim, be reasonable.' That's what John Churchill, Earl of Aberdeen wants, and Lizzy his good woman too. Be reasonable!" Lurid accounts of Jim's encounters with the employers starred his nightly addresses: "'Why do you worry about these clod'oppers?'" they asked me. Clod'oppers! I told them my life is given to you clod'oppers!" But Larkin can only be reported by himself. Happily I have preserved one long speech of Larkin which reveals him as he appeared in the days of the Great Strike, though this speech was in fact given before his departure to America in September 1914, after the strike was a memory and the war had begun. The meeting was held near the Parnell Monument, Dublin, to commemorate James Nolan, John Byrne and Alice Brady, who had died from baton blows and a bullet during the strike; it shows Larkin rousing the populace:

"If we had the eloquence of a Burke we could not deal

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adequately with the subject. Nolan lies dead. Burke lies dead. Only two! What of our thousands who lie dead? What of the thousands of our exiles of whom every sea claims its quota? To-day men who marched with Byrne and Nolan are on the Flemish shore. God help and guard them! Why did they go? No effort was made to call upon England's last reserve to stand fast at home to carry us to our ultimate destiny. Twelve months ago to-day, I was at the Imperial Hotel. (Loud cheering. An allusion to Larkin's attempt to address a banned meeting from a Dublin hotel owned by the leader of the employers, William Martin Murphy. Tearing off his false beard he had addressed the crowds in O'Connell Street, and brutal baton charges had followed). At this hour I was in College Street Bridewell, guarded by drunken hooligans. A short time ago some of you were writing letters to get up testimonials for two of these hooligans. One day a rebel, next day an Imperialist. There is a leader (pointing to the Parnell statue behind him) who knew where he was going. To-day there is no man. To-day we see the men of our blood clothed in England's shame, our own boys who should be in green. We have seen England's patriots swinging round the necks of those men, singing *God save the King*. They told you last year that I was an ally of England's trying to seduce the Irish Workers. That was a foul lie. Then that I was the son of Carey; an anti-Home Ruler. I want more than Home Rule. I know more of Ireland than that—know more of her hopes and destiny (here a man in the crowd interrupted and would have been roughly handled but Larkin intervened, saying every man was entitled to his opinion. Assisting the man to a seat in the wagonette beside him, Larkin went on). There are two roads. Which will you take? We could win our freedom in a week, if

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we told Asquith not a man shall leave Ireland unless Ireland has the rights which Canada and Australia have. Never mind his bastard Home Rule! We will have the same rights as Canada. . . . Redmond does not speak for me. He has no right to speak for us. If it is a dreadful thing for a man to give up his soul, then it is the greatest of crimes to give up the soul of our nation for a promise from coward Asquith whose word cannot be relied upon. He dared not carry out the law in the armed North. Why not gaol them? He is too great a coward! Our blood was shed in Dublin streets only four weeks ago. The assassins went through the streets with loaded guns, not to kill armed men but defenceless citizens. Let them go out to kill Germans now. I hope the day will come when you will stand fast and say 'hands up' to this cowardly Government. We can do it. There are no better men in the British Isles than you. . . . I'd win liberty in a week if I had the mandate Redmond had. My British comrades with whom I have worked, whom I have starved with, have said I am wrong to speak sedition to Irishmen. They are Englishmen standing by England. I am an Irishman and am going to stand fast by Ireland. They have said I won't be allowed to speak in England. I'll go and let them stop me. They say they won't send us money. To hell with their money! . . .

"We have no quarrel with Germany and no quarrel with Belgium. My grandfather was put on the triangle and pitch-capped. It was not a German who did that. For every crime a German has done, England in Ireland has committed thousands. England's path in Ireland is drenched with blood. . . . In a few days a new Pope will be elected. Ask him to demand the old Christian creed—Peace on earth, good will to men! Call on Catholic Austria, Catholic Belgium for an

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arbitration board. There is no time for God to-day in this fight—all we have time to do is murder. If this is Christianity it is about time we had a reconstruction. England is down on the knee praying ‘For God’s sake come to save the Empire!’ Praying to the coolie. I hope to God that every coolie who comes to interfere in European politics will never go back. We want our own good lads to stop at home. Only a few short weeks ago we were commemorating the brutal murder of our comrades, Quinn, Brennan and Mrs. Duffy. A few days ago they died—murdered. To-day our Irish lads are fighting for their murderers. . . . Now I’ll ask you are you prepared to sell yourselves as hired assassins. Those who are, show your hands. Those who will be tools of England show your hands—‘I promise to be England’s garrison’—If you are Englishmen, good luck to you. If you are Irishmen, God help you. . . . Follow in the footsteps of Tone and Emmet. Stand fast by Ireland and Ireland will stand fast by you.”<sup>1</sup>

The story of the Nineteen Thirteen strike has often been told. In these memories of Sion it may be briefly put: twenty thousand workers held out for over six months for the elementary right to belong to the union of their choice, and they were backed by the whole forces of Labour in Ireland and Great Britain. It ended in a stalemate on the vital issue, leaving Larkin’s Union shattered in membership and finance. It opened with one of the most brutal batonnings of unarmed crowds that Dublin had ever known and split the rising militant Nationalist movement from top to bottom, and while it lasted the very air of Dublin was electric with revolution. The greatest brain in the Irish Labour movement summed it up in eloquent words, for thus Connolly predicted the story would be told some day by an Irish writer: “It

<sup>1</sup> *Irish Worker*, 5th September 1914.

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will tell how like an inspiration there came to these Irish women and girls the thought that no free nation could be reared which tolerated the enslavement of its daughters to the worst forms of wage slavery, and how in the glow of that inspiration they arose from their seats in the workshop or factory and went out to suffer and struggle along with their men. It will tell how the general labourers, the men upon whose crushed lives are built the fair fabric of civilisation, from whose squalid tenements the sweet-smelling flowers of capitalist culture derive their aroma, by whose horny hands and mangled bodies are brought the ease and safety of a class that hates and despises them, by whose ignorance their masters purchase their knowledge—it will tell how these labourers dared to straighten their bent backs and, looking in the faces of their rulers, dared to express the will to be free. And it will tell how that spectacle of the slave of the underworld, looking his masters in the face without terror, and fearlessly proclaiming the kinship and union of all with each and each with all, caught the imagination of all unselfish souls, so that the skilled artisan took his place also in the place of conflict and danger, and the men and women of genius, the artistic and *litterati*, hastened to honour and serve those humble workers whom all has hitherto despised and scorned.”

“A. E.” one morning electrified Dublin by an open letter to the Dublin employers published in the *Irish Times*, telling them to cry aloud to Heaven for new souls, for they were sounding the death-knell of autocracy in industry, and warning them that “even in the Dark Ages humanity could not endure the sight of such suffering, and it learnt of such misuse of power by slow degrees through rumour, and when it was certain it razed the Bastilles to their foundations. It remained for the

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twentieth century and the capital city of Ireland to see an oligarchy of 400 masters deciding openly upon starving 100,000 people, and refusing to consider any solution except that fixed by their pride. You, masters, asked men to do that which masters of labour in any other city in these islands had not dared to do. You insolently demanded of those men who were members of a trade union that they should resign from that union; and from those who were not members, you insisted upon a vow that they should never join it.

“Your insolence and ignorance of the rights conceded to workers universally in the modern world were incredible and as great as your inhumanity. If you had between you collectively a portion of human soul as large as a threepenny bit you would have sat day and night with the representatives of Labour, trying this or that solution of the trouble, mindful of the women and children who at least were innocent of wrong against you. You went into conference with representatives of the State, because, dull as you are, you knew public opinion would not stand your holding out. You chose as your spokesman the bitterest tongue that ever wagged in these islands. (A reference to the Askwith Commission, where Larkin gave evidence and Tim Healy spoke for the employers. The Report condemned the employers’ demand for a pledge.) And then when an award was made by men who have an experience in industrial matters a thousand times transcending yours, who have settled disputes in industries so great that the sum of your petty enterprises would not equal them, you withdrew again, and will not agree to accept their solution and fall back again on your devilish policy of starvation.”

It was a landmark on the road to revolution. The stubborn Dublin workers were starved back to work. In the Hermitage, Pearse—who openly upheld the

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strikers' cause and kept Larkin's son at his school—pondered the social question seriously, turning over the pages of Connolly's *Labour in Irish History*. In the November the Irish Volunteers were launched at a public meeting. Larkin's men howled down an unpopular speaker. There was a sullen breach between the militant Nationalists and the beaten workers. But perhaps the whole story of the Strike is summed up in the question overheard between two strikers lined up for the food doled out to them each day from the food-ships sent over by sympathisers: "Is there any danger of a settlement, Mike?"

Behind the picturesque figure of Larkin rose that of James Connolly, and it was said many of the Dublin employers had come to think that in their attack upon Larkin they had called up a more deadly enemy in this quiet man with the Northern accent and the grey eyes burning with a cold, implacable light under his lofty forehead crowned with dark hair. Connolly's cold but glowing words fell on many soils: America from coast to coast, a Glasgow street corner, an Albert Hall audience, the students of the National University, the Nationalists who still frown on Larkin, the workers of Belfast and Dublin. Even Arthur Griffith, hostile to Larkin and the Strike, admits Connolly is a man of his word, nay, the one man with a head on his shoulders amongst those Internationals, Benevolists, Foreign Emissaries and riff-raff down in Liberty Hall.



## ELEVEN

BUT there is no revolution yet. The Yank tells Dinniper all the blue stories he knows to make him less bookish, and Sla tells Dinniper that there are several things one must learn before one faces the great world: cards, funny stories, but above all a sense of proportion. And the Dogs settle down to their books and Pearse goes away to America, leaving Willie in charge. But just before that Dinniper amuses Sla with his lack of knowledge of explosives. One night Dinniper was returning home along the Leinster Road, Rathmines, when he saw a great crowd outside Madame de Marcievicz's house. The police had just raided it without result. She argued with the police, who tried to move the crowd on: "Come inside everybody and don't let those brutes molest you. Please be to God the day will come when they and their friends the British shall taste the cold steel. Come inside everybody. Any friend of Ahland is welcome." "Ah, give over, ma'am," mutters the exasperated inspector, "we are not hurting anybody." The police go away and Dinniper goes upstairs. Madame welcomes them all and declares that she has just escaped ten years in prison by the happy removal of a load of gelignite just in time. Just before those devils came. Some Fianna boys approach her. She pulls a packet of Banba cigarettes from her pocket and lights up with a cry to her dog in the distance: "Oh, Angelface!" She plunges her hand into her pocket again and waves two or three rifle cartridges at the boys: "Won't it be a grand day for Ahland when we all put these through her enemies?" Demurely

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they affirm. Again and again she describes the raid. Dinniper is introduced. She again describes the raid and asks that Mr. Pearse be told that the scoundrels and devils had got nothing. She falls silent and pensive: brooding and fine-featured. As Dinniper goes out a friend whispers that he fears the G-men at his heels: to avoid accidents will Dinniper take something back to St. Enda's and hide it for him or hand it over to the Volunteers? Dinniper sees an unfamiliar object heaved from a pocket: a hand grenade. He slips it into his hip-pocket with the vaguest idea as to what it may be or how to use it. As he walks the two miles to Rathfarnham his imagination begins to work and the bomb seems to grow hotter. Shall he throw it away before it bursts or will it crackle first. Risks it and walks ahead. Hot again. Remembers something Sla once said about a pin. Pin firm. Loud laughter from Sla and Yam when Dinniper arrives with his bomb and tale. Sla looks and tells Dinniper that the case is an empty one. Pearse looks concerned when the raid is mentioned and nods his head vigorously when ten years are mentioned. Wonders Madame is so outspoken to comparative strangers. "Quite mad," says Mrs. Pearse, "but mad in the right way, perhaps." Pearse sighs and goes back to his dreams beside the round table, mellow lamp-glow on his falcon face. Dinniper and Yam and Willie argue. Dinniper is boiling with suppressed fury over the remark of a bronze-haired young woman at Madame's who has declared that she hates all the English with an unholy hate, and cannot stay in the same room with any of them, even the reputed English revolutionaries who have passed through Dublin during the Strike. Dinniper boils and swears and boils to the delight of Yam and Willie, but Pearse dreams on, only smiling from time to time as Dinniper's furious proclamation of Internationalism is countered by Willie. Willie laughs and by hook and by

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crook they arrive at a stage when Willie lays down the law on Ibsen, and tells the funny tale of his stage appearances in Tchekov recently when he had forgotten his words and paused too long, and after the curtain went down that ejot from Rathgar who murders all music on any instrument and wears the perpetual half-wit smile—that was Dinniper on him—rushed round and said: “William Pearse, I must congratulate you upon your splendid acting! Those pauses above all were sublime, for in them you caught the very soul of Tchekov!” Pearse descends from his dreams and tells many diverting tales of his youth. . . .

Gun-runings at Howth. . . . Shots in Dublin. . . . The war broke. . . . In the National the Dogs sported the Tricolour and were thought a wild lot of cranks. . . . News came to them of friends of theirs who had fallen at the front. . . . The Volunteers were split from top to bottom. . . . One night Pearse came back with a bruised face from a meeting of the Provisional Committee of the Irish Volunteers. . . . The Redmondites were fighting for control of the organisation. . . . At this meeting some politician had called Pearse a “contemptible cur” and, after warning, Pearse had measured him on the floor. Joseph Devlin was in the chair: “He seemed distressed,” said Pearse. “Whatever he may be as a politician, he is a gentleman at least.” . . . The split came. . . . The war dragged on. . . . 1914 passed. . . .

Pearse had changed much since his return from America early in 1914. He had gone before the war’s outbreak. He had made many speeches in the States and gathered funds for the school. A question had been asked about one speech of his in America by some Tory at Westminster. This annoyed Pearse: “I hope it won’t injure the Volunteers. It was a mild speech. I don’t want any talk about

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twisting the British Lion's tail under the safe shadow of the Stars and Stripes."

America had been much: an event, a pilgrimage, wine to the spirit, packed halls of auditors listening to the tale of Emmet, Tone, the Ireland of to-day as only Patrick Pearse could tell it. But he is glad to see his brother again, though William Pearse has sent weekly and monthly bulletins, and Pearse has written long letters of the wonders of the oceans and the stranger wonders of America. In the lower room of the Hermitage, Pearse fills his willow-pattern cup and tells an animated tale, pacing around the circular oak table and throwing a pensive look through the barred windows into the garden beyond, where Micheál Mag Ruadhri is talking too, and keeping his eye on possible youthful invaders. Pearse has encountered on his lecture tour the shipwrecks of former Irish movements, Clan na Gael celebrities, Land Leaguers, humanists, Indian revolutionaries, reformers, educationalists and old Fenians who had met and talked to him days on end—strange meeting of past and future. One name occurs again and again: John Devoy. "I liked the Fenian remnant best," Pearse adds, "grey-haired, iron-souled human old men who still hope on and sing the songs they used to sing in their British prisons." Then he had planned an early return. The war had shattered all his plans and he had made his will and said: "God alone knows where we shall all end, but we are going ahead." He and Connolly had met, and then into this whirlpool of plot and counter-plot with his school sinking and mainly conducted now by Willie.

Still Pearse has one haven yet. There is his little cottage down in Connemara, and in the summer of 1915 I went down there with him. In the railway carriage at the Broadstone, Pearse unbent and smiled on his mother, sister and Willie. He acted like a gay and winsome child

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intent on a day's outing, laughing loudly and hurling oranges in the air with weird cries in an abandoned fashion. He told us of a dream he had had the night before. Pearse in this dream found himself on a railway platform with several carriages full of Irish Volunteers. A certain Father O'H—— arrived and protested that Pearse was a dangerous character, not fit to travel on any respectable train: "Detain that man! You let him proceed at your peril." Then Pearse had answered indignantly: "Nonsense! Preposterous statements! My name is Patrick Henry Pearse. I am Director of Organisation for the Irish Volunteers. My name is well known. I am a most distinguished person." Pearse collapsed into laughter, saying the dream ended in a game of hide-and-seek between himself and the good Father in and out of all the carriages.

In due course we reached Galway and stayed the night there. Before nightfall we explored the city, rowed up the Corrib and landed near the stone-built misty village of Menlowe, unmortared walls, Irish-speaking old men playing cards seated on stony heaps. Up the Corrib, Pearse rowed stoutly and steadily, pausing every now and then to utter some deliberated thought. He had suddenly become grave and pensive again and this had quieted the company, a result to which he was secretly sensitive. I remember him dropping a phrase to relieve a spasm of silence and restart none too successfully the conversation. "I always think a boat is a wonderful thing. What a marvellous adaptation of beauty and shape to use." He often made remarks like that, and as has been often noted his words sounded like sentences from essays. Some misunderstood this mannerism and felt amused or uncomfortable. That day Pearse's love for Connemara ousted his pensive mood and he became eager and talkative again. His eyes lighted up as he pointed towards Menlowe and its

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grey circle of houses and walls and the Irish-speaking old men: "Here Connemara begins." He walked ahead as we explored a demesne and laughed at the warning notices in English. Several gamekeepers appeared and looked at us curiously. Pearse walked past them, blessing them with an air of authority in Irish in God and the Virgin's names. They returned the blessing, curiosity and wonder in the Gaelic words wrung from them by this imperious townsman with the Connacht accent so pat and stern. We passed a castle half burned in some ancient war, and some handsome country houses. Thereafter the poor houses of the Connemara folk. Pearse smiled sadly and said with feeling: "Here alone perhaps in the world are these sights to be seen since the French Revolution, hovels still lingering at the gates of castles, a rich spiritual life with poverty, a poor spiritual life with riches living side by side."

The next day we proceeded to Rosmuck by train, or rather part of the way, for Rosmuck lies nine miles from a railway station, and we had therefore a long drive by side-car through granite and peat and purple from Maam Station over winding, peak-screened roads. It was a stirring view along those serpentine roads, ever winding and twisting and winding to avoid the bog. The horse trotted bravely while an O'Malley drove, and Pearse explained what famous people the O'Malleys were in Connemara and this particular driver and the local pronunciation of O'Malley here to be O'Milley or O'Málley, and all the while bluish granite mountains soared and beckoned and all around spread the peat-bogs starred by the tiny lakes, each with a local name and every name known to Pearse, who declared for the hundredth time he could find his way blindfold on any road in Connacht. The Twelve Pins came in sight and Pearse waved his hand here and there over the land, naming lake, mountain and district

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away to the Joyce country under its purple mist. He told us many stories he had learned from the people—and who could have guessed that behind his gentle words and look an insurrection simmered, a certainty that his days were irrevocably numbered and this place he would never see in another summer? Away there on that gloomy mountain yonder a stranger had lived for years, coming suddenly in the night from nowhere, henceforth a hermit, perhaps doing a penance of solitude and silence for some deed of blood. We passed a peculiar green building of corrugated iron, a Protestant Church, and then Pearse remembered that many years before the Bible Societies had carried out a proselytising campaign, and even in 1915 a small remnant of the Irish-speaking Protestant colonies still survived. Once on his rambles Pearse had met one of the members, an old man up in a cottage among the hills who opened his Gaelic Bible, read it aloud and argued with Pearse for an hour until the old man's daughter came in and told her father that he had no manners and not to be foolish and that he did not know how to treat a guest and a learned man who knew enough Irish and enough Bible to make up his mind for himself, and the attempted conversion of Pearse went no farther. A lonely letter-box on a post at a cross-roads led Pearse to tell of the extravagant family, long bankrupt and extinct, who had had the box erected as a monument to their exclusiveness, recklessness and pride. A barracks rose beside the rattling wheels and Pearse knew that the sergeant within was a very cranky, crusty and cantankerous fellow companioned by six splendid constables, enthusiastic Irish speakers who spent their time in shooting wild ducks, fishing and studying with zeal the poems of Eoghan Ruadh O'Sullivan. The car stopped at the schoolmaster's house and Patrick Connolly welcomed Pearse warmly. His wife came out and told Mrs. Pearse and Miss Pearse how they would

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find the cottage. Inside like startled birds the four daughters of the schoolmaster retreated from our gaze while their mother laughed and said they would grow out of all that, but when young people lived among lakes and bogs they became curlews and mountain birds, easily startled by wild young men from the cities and poets from Dublin, all this for Willie and me whose ties and locks must have startled her ducklings. Proceeded to the cottage, a white, thatched, oblong building with green door, porchway and two windows in front, approached by a peat-sodded path from the main road. Here was the spiritual home of Pearse, which in the last years he visited every summer to pay a last farewell to

*. . . Some green hill where shadows drifted by,  
Some quiet hill where mountainy man hath sown  
And soon would reap; near to the gate of Heaven;  
Or children with bare feet upon the sands  
Of some ebb'd sea, or playing on the street  
Of little towns in Connacht,  
Things young and happy.  
And then my heart hath told me:  
These will pass. . . .*

Below lay a fifty-acre lake legend tenanted with a Water Horse. Beyond the rare walls of the cottage the Atlantic heaved and moaned with tales of lost ships or murmured a summons to ride on its bosom to the Arran Isles on a fair day. On every side rose the purple hills and peat a-gleam with unnumbered lakelets. Pearse sat at the kitchen table writing the closing tales in his book of short stories, *The Mother*. He turned aside to discuss the completed stories with Willie and me, and said he thought the best the grimmest one, a tale of a woman under a curse called the "Black Chafer." Then he sighed that he had never written a story about turf or shown up enough the hard life of the people. He said this sadly with almost the



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air of a man who all at once comes upon an intolerable personal grievance. Sometimes he went down and bathed in the lake while Willie guarded him from the banks with a long, strong rope as Pearse was no swimmer. This tickled the brothers so much that they gave up the attempt with loud merriment and mutual criticisms. Returning, Pearse mused on his cottage and said that one of the builders had been an old man who took his task very slowly and seriously, making progress by inches, but consoling Pearse's impatience with the sole remark: "Won't it be a fine house when it is finished? Indeed it will be a fine house when it is finished." Pearse was more outspoken than I had ever known him before. Night by night he spoke to Willie and me about everything by turns. Much about the future of the Irish language. Here in this self-contained community which he had once known as purely Irish-speaking, English was creeping in among the younger generation. It amused him when we walked abroad in the day-time to speak to the men working the land and smile at the English expressions speckling the Gaelic: "Becripes, *Tá* . . . bedamnedbut *tá*," from those who knew no other words of English, but he said this was the beginning of the end unless some great change came. And what the change would be sometimes broke through his thoughts. News of some kind from Dublin weighed on his mind as July passed. He read the proof of an article he had written on O'Donovan Rossa, whose body was being brought back from America. Pearse disliked what he had written on Rossa and said it seemed all words and no right praise for the old Fenian. Again he read Connolly's *Worker's Republic*, with its open incitements to revolt and attacks upon the moderate party in the Irish Volunteers and he seemed preoccupied and uneasy. Once on the roadside Pearse engaged in a long conversation with a Volunteer sympathiser who sharply

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condemned Casement's Irish Brigade formed from Irish prisoners of war in Germany. "How can we defend such men," the question was pressed insistently, "who take an oath to fight in an army of their own free will and then break it? I wouldn't trust such men. If they were conscripts they would be right to desert and shoot their officers and fight for the devil himself, but this oath they have freely taken should bind them." Pease looked uneasy and admitted he didn't much like this idea of the Irish Brigade. There was force in these arguments. Long ago in arguments Pease had been wont to declare that no oath could bind Irishmen to serve England, even the oath of soldiers, strong and all as he had worshipped military discipline ("It's the one exception Pat allows to unquestioning military obedience," Willie had said, chuckling), but in this roadside argument Pease seemed shaken and uneasy. "I don't like the idea myself," he again admitted as the sturdy Connachtman pressed the point home again and again and then attacked the Germans as a pack of military bullies as bad as the English, as vain as allies for Irish freedom as the French fleets which tarried from victory at the mouth of Bantry Bay. Then Pease's fire and confidence re-woke in his eyes. They seemed to sweep seaward in a promise that on the ocean a hope lingered still. His words to us both were vague: "Soon . . . you will see, both of you, all of us," he said, his eyes on the Atlantic. What purpose and hope were hidden behind his words? Of what was he thinking, a German landing, an arms' ship, or the body of O'Donovan Rossa already coming across the waves? He changed the conversation abruptly and we never knew.

The holiday neared its end. Once we went on a sixteen-mile walk to Cashel and back. We visited a quaint hotel whose landlord proudly displayed a portrait of King

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Edward smiling at him. This simple snobbery tickled Pearse and he spoke of the landlord affectionately as Johnny, walking round the room to admire the picture of the King smiling down on a bald and bare-headed Johnny. Johnny was a lovable man, said Pearse, whether he basked in the smile of monarchs or whether he didn't. I said I would write a sketch of him when I returned to Dublin, but Pearse shook his head and said Johnny must not be held up to ridicule, as the neighbours laughed enough at him already and that was one thing, but to put him into print would be unkind, for no one would really know what a kind heart Johnny had, whether he doffed his hat to kings or whether he didn't. Outside as we watched a mountain which peeps up from every part of Connemara, another genial old snob looking like a retired Colonel, strolled up and waved his hand round the scenery: "Nothing to compare with it in the world, gentlemen, absolutely nothing!" He smiled and produced three copies of the Gospel according to St. John: "I bring down these in my trunk for the benefit of the peasantry every year, gentlemen." He begged us to honour him by each accepting a copy, not that we looked as if we needed them—he would not for a moment suggest that we were peasants, but would we oblige him? We obliged him, Pearse chuckling all the way back over the word "peasantry," and saying he was sorry he had not had a very seditious leaflet to give the Colonel in exchange. "Just as well you hadn't, Pat," said Willie. "We should all have ended in jail. He would have sent the police after us." Then the pair wondered why lovers of tracts and Bibles never recognise true religion under a thatch when it is barefooted and wrestles with sea and rocky soil to keep its body alive. Bibles in English to Irish-speaking Connemara with a Faith in its very bones! So back along the roads weary but joyful with the Gospels in our

pockets and very little conversational power left in us.

Another day and Pearse and Willie and I went on a cycle-ride through Recess, Glen Inagh, Coill Mor, Leenane, Maam, Maam Cross, some fifty-six miles in all, Pearse very confidential as to his early days at school, his struggles with his father's business, Willie's studies in Paris, the debts of honour he had taken over, his editorship of the Gaelic League organ, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the early feuds in the Gaelic League which had hurt him deeply—on no other subject had I ever heard him speak with such feeling—Sgoil Eanna and its support and lack of support, the sleepless nights the crisis in the Volunteer organisation had given him, behind it all phrases and words only to be expected from a man who knows his life nears the crisis of its end. All through the thirty-six miles to Leenane against a strong head wind he spoke like that while the sun broiled us. Through moody beauty past all manner of Syngesque old men and women. Pearse hailed Kilkeirin Bay flowing in several miles among the hills as a lake where the British Fleet could be hidden and no one the wiser. He talked of the islands to be found along Lough Corrib, and said all those who were worrying about the social systems of the world might do worse than stop making speeches and land on one of these islands and start all over again with building a world after their dreams. All this at Leenane where we devoured rashers and eggs before we roused ourselves and had a magnificent run back in the moonlight the many miles to Rosmuck, where bad news awaited us: Miss Pearse had been attacked with appendicitis and had been ordered to Dublin by an early train. Next morning after her departure we spent a melancholy day until Pearse roused us all, saying we looked like a funeral party and we must hope for the best. Stirring news reached Pearse as we

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prepared for almost immediate departure: he was to deliver the O'Donovan Rossa Oration at the Rossa Funeral on August the first. Back over the serpentine roads to Maam, and through Galway where G-men prowled at Pearse's heels. In the carriage half-way to Dublin a truculent and drunken countryman lurched into the carriage blowing foul smoke-clouds over all the ladies and flourishing a bottle of whisky with an invitation to us all to take a swig. Pearse came down from Heaven where he weaved the phrases of his Oration with an imperious order to the countryman to behave himself and stop smoking in a non-smoking carriage under pain of instant removal. The countryman issued a general invitation to us all to light up and not mind the Pig. And until he left the carriage many stations onward he kept up a chorus of "Don't mind the Pig, enjoy yourselves!" Sometimes he turned to Pearse and addressed him by name as, "You pig, pig, pig!" Pearse sat in fist-clenched silence, his face flushed while Willie laughed quietly, warning his brother with looks to say no more to the infuriated combination of clay pipe, wild hat and whisky-bottle at his elbow. We reached Dublin on the very eve of the Rossa Funeral and found it electrified with the preparations for the lying in state and the march to Glasnevin. All the peace of the hills and lakes fell from us suddenly.

Pearse stood beside O'Donovan Rossa's grave and in an immortal Oration sketched himself. His romanticisation of O'Donovan Rossa really portrays Patrick Pearse: his closing words are a herald of the coming Revolution:

"And the seeds sown by the young men of '65 and '67 are coming to their miraculous ripening to-day. Rulers and Defenders of Realms had need to be wary if they would guard against such processes. Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women

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spring living nations. The Defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think they have pacified Ireland. They think they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools!—they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.”

Beside the grave he stood, impressive and austere in green, with slow and intense delivery, and as he cried aloud upon the fools he threw back his head sharply and the expression seemed to vivify the speech which ended calmly and proudly. He walked home alone, and sat in his study: at last he had spoken the just word he sought to immortalise a man less great than himself.

## TWELVE



DINNIPER and Yam and the Dog Himself and Sla and the Yank sat in the Hermitage on Easter Eve. Pearse and his brother had gone away down into Dublin on Holy Saturday and the Dogs sat round the table in their room trying to decide whether the Easter Sunday would see them in armed revolt or was this just another rumour and on the morrow it would be merely the advertised All-Ireland manoeuvres of the Irish Volunteers. They were used to surprises and to Pearse's talk of Risings, but though Pearse could talk he could also hold his counsel. He had given little hint except to ask them to write home and remind their relatives to send any cheques in future to his mother. Rumours of suppression of the Volunteers were in the air. This night they were fairly certain that to-morrow was the revolution. The split among the Volunteers had penetrated even among them, and the Bloody Man had gone out determined to stick to MacNeill whatever happened. The Dogs were tired. In the intervals of their University studies in the evenings they had made bombs and stored them in a place of safety. They had had sleepless nights making these crude tin-can bombs while Sla had jested and the Yank had told hair-raising and humorous stories, and on the Thursday they had said good-bye to Liam Mellows down at the Hermitage gate. He had come to them disguised as a clergyman from Connolly's house in Belfast after his escape from England and shared their meals and driven away to Galway. They spent another sleepless night and remembered all their nights' drilling in

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the fields and the little mill down in Rathfarnham. "There are only twenty-five shots to each man of the Dublin Brigade," said Yam; "but what about it?" A picture of the Risings of Ireland frustrated by a swoop of the British Government of the eve came to their minds. Sadly they looked at one another: if they rose some would fall. They thought of the great hostile Dublin and the guns and forces of England that would come against them. And then they thought of Pearse and snapped their fingers. Never had they loved him so much as these days. They shrugged their shoulders and made all manner of jokes, and slept. In the morning they knew that a Rising was contemplated, and frustrated for the cancellation order in the *Sunday Independent* signed by Eoin MacNeill told them what had been intended for the manœuvres that day. Pearse came back in the evening and hardly spoke. He and his brother had said good-bye to them on Holy Saturday, and they had removed all their bombs and loaded them into a car at midnight, and the load was driven to Liberty Hall where Dinniper cycled later to deliver a note to Connolly sitting guarded in his little room there as cool as a cucumber, so cool that Dinniper if he had not put two and two together would have decided that there was nothing in the manœuvres after all. Easter Sunday passed. In the morning the Dogs got two personal notes from Pearse telling them to bring everything and join him and enclosing the mobilisation order of the Volunteers for Easter Monday at ten o'clock. Only seventy members of the Rathfarnham company remained after the war broke out and the Volunteer organisation split, and of these not all turned out. Eoin MacNeill arrived at Rathfarnham and warned the company that they were marching into a military trap. But the officers said they would obey their orders and marched ahead through the



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little village to the last tram into Dublin. Except a few Volunteers, scouts outside Jacobs' factory, the journey in was without incident. At College Green the trams were turning back and shots sounded afar off. The Dogs were unable to think. They went into Liberty Hall and found it barricaded. Then an order from Pearse arrived telling them to join him in the General Post Office. As they dashed across from Middle Abbey Street there was a volley and a second one at the retreating Lancers, and looking up they saw the Republican Tri-colour floating over the Headquarters of the revolt.

And this is what happened, told tersely in a note smuggled out of Stafford Detention Barracks after the collapse of the Rising: it was written on a small sheet of paper and slipped into the hand of a visitor, and its merit is that it was a synopsis of several experiences in the General Post Office and the Church Street area: the blanks were left as a precaution in case the paper were seized:

### WITHIN THE GENERAL POST OFFICE FOR THE FIVE DAYS

The attack on the General Post Office took place at noon. A company of Volunteers armed with pikes, shot-guns and rifles charged the buildings at the ringing command of the gallant officer in charge, disposed of the feeble resistance of the small garrison—inasmuch as the lack of ammunition rendered the guard practically unarmed—laughed at an angry old lady disturbed buying stamps, watched the staff fly pell-mell out, and soon occupied the position. Simultaneously the following positions were occupied: Lower Castle Yard, Four Courts, Stephen's Green, Jacobs' factory and other places. An attack on Portobello also came off. One participant relates: "Marched according to orders to Liberty Hall with small company in which I drilled,

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little expecting to be so soon in arms against the armed forces of Great Britain. Great excitement prevailed and the surrounding area was desolate in appearance. The door is locked. Congestion of traffic has whetted our curiosity as we marched through the average holiday crowds and soldiers strolling with their girls past College Green. Admitted to Larkin's palace we swarm upstairs. The Volunteers are 'out' and Ireland is rising. It is evident from the excited shouts to keep 'a watch on the railway line' and 'fill all vessels with water.' Rifles and flushed faces. A feeling of momentary sickness, then wonder. An excited youth informs our commander that there are no longer Volunteers or Citizen Army, so Mr. Connolly had said when the row started and the Volunteers had been addressed in front of the Hall, only the Army of the Irish Republic. Commandant Pearse sends down a message to us to proceed to the G.P.O. We hurry downstairs and at the double across Abbey Street. 'Hurrah for the Volunteers!' shouts an aged working man. 'Hammer the s—— out the ——!' We rush across Princes Street catching a glimpse of a girl crying and hurrying along, a well-dressed young man beside her. Kids cheer from doorways. A dim crowd up towards the Rotunda. The G.P.O. windows loom before us, men inside with rifles behind barricaded windows. Our commander's rifle-butt smashes through glass and wood and breaks. Scramble in and over, shots ring deafeningly in our ears, a cry, 'the Lancers!' and a volley from within to stop those troops who retire, leaving two dead horses behind. Hurry. Locks blown in, men rushed to the roof, to second storey. Sacks, books, typewriters are stuffed in all hitherto not strengthened windows. Men watch grimly behind. Pearse and his brother appear and survey the scene calmly within, though the latter looks a trifle

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sad. Vessels are filled with water everywhere. Cooking is carried on where the G.P.O. staff left off. The great door leading into Princes Street is eventually covered with a rough barricade. A young officer dashes in cheering, a smile on his flushed features. Later he is hurried by, the lower part of his face severely injured with a bomb explosion, his hands, chin and neck streaming blood. He is ordered at the revolver's point—for he grows obstinate—when his wounds are dressed and shock subsides—to hospital. Blood is new to us and we only learn later that he has recovered. Inside organisation proceeds. Parties come and go. The crowd outside cheers the hoisted Republican flags and the Proclamation. Pearse speaks without. Connolly, a grim, manly figure in green Commandant's uniform, grasps his hand: 'Thank God, Pearse, we have lived to see this day!' An orderly desolation has settled down within. A dazed D.M.P. man sits in the yard, florid, his head between his hands, but plucks up his courage to ask the rebels for beer as he has five children and one wife. He doesn't get anything but kindness. Ambulances draw up outside and bear away wounded brought in. The Cumann na mBan girls soon, however, have set up a hospital on the ground floor in a former sorting-room. Henry Street corner and block opposite are gradually occupied by Volunteers. Gun shots and startling rumours of Ireland ablaze are as common as rosary beads round the necks of the watchers on the windows. Fires start opposite, are quenched, begin again and we grow used to the flames leaping up as we fall into brief spells of sleep or face the whizzing bullets whistling past and around us. Pop-pop-pop. Machine-guns are destroying Liberty Hall. Boom! Boom! Heavier guns. We get used to them. But before that we have seen looting without, heard heavy firing in the

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sleepless nights, stood to arms to resist the long expected general assault, seen Volunteers sally out on 'death and glory missions,' or simply with revolvers and batons to suppress the looters whom MacDermott has appealed to on several occasions. We have heard 'Go upstairs to meals!' or 'Two men dying within, be quiet!' with equal equanimity. We have learned to reverence more the bravery and devotion of the women of our race. It is the fire which steals in, around and above us in the night which eventually drives us out. Sleep, hunger and thirst are dead sensations. At last the cordon of fire ceases to startle us. But the roof catches. We stand silent behind three rows of barricades. Joseph Plunkett's clear ringing voice and his clear humorous eyes remain in our memory. We are in the midst of a darkened, leaping, roaring house of fire. We secure rations, and dash out upon the street, swept with gunfire and lighted with flames. Some dash up alleys and seek refuge in houses as the snipers and machine-gun fire lights up the dark alleys. Men begin boring through houses. O'Rahilly out-distances his men and dies riddled within a few feet of a barricade. Connolly is carried in a sheet and under a Red Cross flag to safety. And Nelson's Pillar towers above the blazing G.P.O., his back to Parnell's outstretched hand, on the flames consuming the first gallant footprints of rough and courtly heroes on oft-trod long, winding, obstructed path to Ireland's freedom."

Let it stand without correction of its repetitions and crudities for a first-hand record of the time. In a moment I shall quote two more. I stood within it all, and a curious cloud fell over my mind and spirits, and a conflict sharpened in my mind. My old Socialist-pacifist hatred of war, my doubts about the jingoism and race-hatred of Sinn Fein and then the spell of Pearse. A working man spoke to me and voiced my thoughts.

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I knew him slightly, a pale-faced man who wrote simple verse in Larkin's paper and the mosquito Press of Sinn Féin. He waved his shotgun towards Connolly and said: "Things are desperate when an anti-militarist like him leads us into this." Upstairs a woman echoed the conflict in my mind, for I could see a glory and a horror in all I saw, a deep respect in my heart for all those doomed men and women behind the flames and exposed to the bullets. Half the Dublin I knew seemed there. Sometimes a messenger came to tell us: "This is the only cheerful place in Dublin. In the city they think that you are all dead men. Black gloom down there." Upstairs this woman spoke, half to herself, half to a poet dangling a revolver: "Do you know that even if the British broke in I don't know whether it is right to take life. It's all right for the Volunteers. They can obey their orders."

On the worst night of all, when the fires glared in on the ground floor of the G.P.O., Pearse came and sat beside me. He was seated on a barrel, his slightly flushed face crowned by his turned-up military hat. He watched the flames leaping and curling fantastically in the stillness, broken periodically by rifle volleys. Around him men slept on the floor, Connolly amongst them. Others were on guard behind loop-holed sandbags. We talked casually for some time, bullets frightened us all said Pearse, only liars were not afraid of bullets, we might all come through, perhaps, perhaps not. I shrugged my shoulders. I was past feeling, and told Pearse I had only one reason for wishing to survive, that I might write a book. He smiled and we sat silent, for in that great agony how futile seemed all ink and pen and words. The volleys rolled away, and Pearse watched the flames. "All the boys were safe," he said, with a sigh of relief. Then he suddenly turned and asked me, casually but

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with a certain abruptness: "It was the right thing to do, wasn't it?" "Yes. Failure means the end of everything, the Volunteers, Ireland, all!" And the tone showed the agony of his mind, but an agony flaming to final conviction. Outside the flames grew brighter and there was a terrific burst of gunfire away in the darkness. Pearse paused and continued with deep enthusiasm and passionate conviction in his words: "Well, *when* we are all *wiped out*, people will blame us for everything, condemn us, but only for this protest the war would have ended and nothing would have been done. After a few years, they will see the meaning of what we tried to do." Then the conversation turned on the heroism of the insurgents: "What a man," said Pearse, "what a great man is O'Rahilly, coming in here to us although he is against the Rising! . . . Emmet's two-hour insurrection is nothing to this! . . . They will talk of Dublin in future as one of the splendid cities like they speak to-day of Paris! Dublin's name will be glorious for ever! . . . The heroism of the women down there on the quays, carrying gelignite under fire in spite of every danger." He shook his head obstinately when I defended the Volunteers of his company who had sided with MacNeill and refused to come out, and these included one St. Enda ex-student. "At least, they might have stood by me, now," he said, and then added: "If the British capture them, poor fellows, they will be shot and not even have glory."

Back to the old writing on the folded and faded sheets: the next page tells how the insurgents fared in the Church Street area in the shadow of the Four Courts:

Little did we expect when we left home that such exciting events awaited us. We had heard vague rumours of the military raid and thought an ordinary route march was before us. Perhaps we might be attacked to-day,

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perhaps not, meanwhile, we turn out. Reported at —— Hall. Little excitement. Daly (one of the leaders afterwards executed) speaks: "Men, I want you to listen to me for a few moments and no applause must follow my statement. To-day at noon an Irish Republic will be declared. I only wish to say that communication with —— has been cut off and that in less than an hour we may be in action." A bombshell. Most in good spirits. Some unable to stand shock, but only wished to see a priest, no cowardice. Best part of week given to barricading streets, fortifying houses with sandbags, boring walls, preparing for retreat if need be, etc. Took up position in —— Street. Only action towards end of week, mostly sniping, a very lively and dangerous sport. Every one works with a will. Every wall bored is a life saved. No place for thought of personal safety. No sleep but energetic preparations for fray. Religious consolations keep our spirits up and make us indifferent to our fate. (Opinions expressed by several men there): "Did not expect to live from the start but relied on the Sacred Heart." Only wished to live to talk about the fight with comrades and live to fight another day. The cause was good. Got word to evacuate long-held position on the Friday evening. Moved towards North Brunswick Street. Sniping much in evidence. Got to new position in safety though comrades fell beside us. "Captain —— is wounded." "—— is dead." —— was lying dead in yard close by. Two more killed upstairs. No panic at this, rather callous in fact. The pale and nervous faces of some hardly conducive to courage or confidence. Advise comrade to stand in front of me and take cover. He does so. A bullet strikes his belt: "I'm shot!" "Run to the nearest hospital and I'll cover you!" Discovers that bullet is only in his belt. Priest goes upstairs to attend dying, brave as all the

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priests were in the midst of the gravest danger everywhere. Six or seven o'clock on Saturday evening the report comes that Commander-in-chief has surrendered. Priest only has it as a rumour. Council of war held by us. Captain was wounded. Commandant absent. No prominent officer present. "Fight to a finish" agreed upon, not unanimous but "we'll stick to our leaders." Completely cut and to fight to a finish seemed futile. Prepare for machine-gun attack. Surrounded on all sides by troops who grossly over-estimated our strength. They had steadily pressed in upon us. An attack would have overwhelmed us. Truce agreed upon after a priest had said: "For the sake of God, men, and the women and children, listen to me. You don't know what we have endured for the last week. I ask you to call a truce so that the dead and wounded may be taken off the streets! The English have called a truce." "Can we trust an Englishman's word?" Truce, perforce. Surely God saved us from death that night. A charge meant death eventually. Truce kept on both sides. No shot fired all night. Sentries retired to rest after dark. Our leader, a young chap of twenty was plucky: "Boys, the Fianna Fáil knows no surrender. (Poetic name for the Irish Volunteers: the Militia of the Isle of Destiny and present name of the de Valera party.) We have provisions to last, and we will fight till death!" "Aye, aye!" said we. Truce continues till Sunday morning. Heard Mass, received Holy Communion at the Mass, dressed up and stand to arms to await written orders of surrender. Did not know Pearse was in Dublin Castle. Pearse's letter arrives and is read out. Our leader to the dumbfounded British officer: "We only expect the treatment of the men of Ninety-Eight!" Unconditional surrender. March out, surrender, lay down arms at fixed spot. Marched to Castle and afterwards to Rich-



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mond Barracks. Linenhall Barracks was burned during the fighting in this area."

The next page reads in part when certain repetitions from the first G.P.O. account have been omitted:

"We are rushed to the roof after our arrival while the inside organisation proceeds. P(earse), meanwhile, quiet and businesslike. B. (Willie), likewise, but a trifle sad and pale. We on the roof are rushed in various parties to occupy positions. The three flags of the Republic float over our heads." I(rish) R(epublic), "It flaps defiantly in the centre. Sense of a dream which even now has not vanished sets in upon us. The usual holiday crowd watches undisturbed, even waves greetings to us. Mechanically we would do or dare anything. . . . Kids below are singing. Crowd cheers Proclamation. Soldiers walk unmolested and unarmed within five yards of our guns. Nightfall. Meals of tea, rice and rumours. We laugh. No sleep. Heavy firing in distance, in Four Courts direction. No sleep. Dawn rises over the city."

*Tuesday.*—Roof still. Smaller crowds in streets. Rumours of Ireland ablaze. Cork, Kerry and Limerick are up and the Curragh line is held both sides. We don't care much. We get used to the bullets. "Hurrah! Who'd miss it? Is so-and-so 'out'? Who was killed? Good man, a pity. Keep under cover!" Inquiries as to advance of troops from different quarters. Our men are to be seen manning shops opposite. Organising of inside and outside defence proceeds. Telephone in good order but the wire is a nuisance when one moves across the parapet. A barricade blocks Earl Street. Looting begins. A fire opposite is put out. Another starts. Get used from then to fires. General preparations to resist siege and, if need be—make last stand. Rain falls and drenches us to the skins. We get waterproofs. News of P(earse) from the gent. in the fur coat (the Yank): "He's in

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good form." (P. and B. inspect the positions next day.) No sleep. Hunger, a past and dead sensation. Night. . . . Queer faces in the sky. . . . Wireless flashes from the D.B.C. Restaurant. Get used to stray bullets and feel good. Drunken man singing is killed by stray shots. Kids singing below: "We are the Volunteers, we'll whack the British Army." Fires proceed, dawn, sleepless but happy. When *will* we be wounded?

*Wednesday.*—Roof still, with an odd visit below. Stoics. Firing from the quays to Abbey Street. Tap-tap-tap. Liberty Hall is gone. Artillery and machine-guns at work. Get used to it. Next sensation please! Bullets overhead and down the street. Promise of relief. Ordered below later where we see our friends. Willie: "That fire cannot be stopped. It will catch the whole block." Pearse calm. James (Connolly): "Boys, they're beaten!" Fall asleep while the fires glare in. Ten hours solid rest. Good outside reports.

*Thursday.*—The blaze spreads along opposite block-house to house. On guard at windows. Boom! The place shakes. Gets stale with repetition. Frequent stands to arms. Snipers and heavy artillery new and prevalent excitements. Connolly wounded in sortie. Armoured car report, and rumour of contemplated advance through Imperial (Hotel's) ruins of troops. Pearse addresses us: "Her name is splendid among the names of cities!" Fires behind in Henry St. Linenhall ablaze. A terrible and depressing night. But the songs ring out and another dawn comes.

*Friday.*—Morning lull. Is it arbitration? Fire gains. The street in ruins. Hasty barricade in front in three rows of coal sacks. Constant stands to arms. Keen sniping from upstairs. Men on roof struck with shrapnel. Desperate fight against the fire which has now burst out upon the G.P.O. roof. Fire wins. One constant stand

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to arms and tension. The women have departed in the morning. One darkened, roaring, leaping blaze in front, above, behind. Debris crashes in. Communications entirely cut. Expectation of general assault. Rations secured. Men shoot two of themselves by mistake. Order to retreat. Dash across the bullet-swept and flame-lit street. Men fall. Henry Place to Moore St. Plunkett rallies men past a fire-swept barricade: "Don't be cowards! Advance!" Past and into houses. All night borings and snatches of rest. Odd meals. Sleep. Fires raging. Nelson looks down on blazing G.P.O.

*Saturday.*—Waiting under cover. Rumours as to fire in new position. Preparations for final charge in rear and front of barricade closing our exit. "Postponed six hours" *perhaps*, countermanded. Waiting, waiting, waiting. Negotiations opened by English. [*sic*] Departure of Pearse as firm as a rock. Tears in MacDermott's eyes. Two o'clock surrender. March out. Plunkett and MacD(ermot) beside us. Corpses on pavement, ruins around us, fires smouldering still. The Last March. Officers of British Army cover us with huge revolvers as we turn into O'Connell Street, lined with troops. The disarming. We lay down everything.

The fires smoulder still. Red Cross wagons as silent as ghosts glide by. Small parties of Volunteers march into the street, bearing white flags, mere specks against the lines of soldiery from Parnell Street to Earl Street. The rifles are taken off the cobbles and the Tommies lumber away beneath their burdens. Soft murmurs and groans escape through the teeth of the Volunteers as a Second Lieutenant or two here and there lingers over the pile of surrendered weapons, slips an automatic pistol into his pocket. Darker and darker. What do they think in Cullenswood and the Hermitage? Whatever has happened outside Dublin? Any wounded there

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requiring attention? Any wounded, please step forward! Murmurs: stay where you are, so long as you can walk don't go whinging to them with a cut finger or a sore leg. Away to the Rotunda Gardens march the rank and file, Tom Clarke, Joseph Plunkett, Willie Pearse, Cumann na mBan girls—all to be herded together in a close-packed heap on the grass. A circle of steel outside the railings and above on the Rotunda roof, a machine-gun and party of khaki snipers. An officer watches us quietly, but he is soon replaced by another, dark-browed, florid and thick-lipped. He strides around looking for looters and threatening to have us all shot and telling us not to smoke, not to stand up and not to lie down and if we want lavatories to use the beds provided and lie in both. He roars madly at his own men and issues the most contradictory orders. Here and there he rushes, shouting at this man and that man, he will have them shot in the morning as looters. He strikes matches and holds them in the faces of his prisoners, yelling: "Anyone want to see the animals?" He bends over Plunkett and snatches a document from an inner pocket: "Ah, his will! Knew what he was coming out to get." He snatches a whistle from Willie Pearse with a sneer. He has first-field dressings torn from the coats of Volunteers, Red Cross armlets ripped away with bayonets. "You are a nice specimen of an English gentleman!" snarls an exasperated victim at him. He strides past swearing. His brogue deepens and at last he withdraws. Ice-cold winds and lurid dreams, and then morning comes. The officer has found his voice again. He yells at Tom Clarke: "That old b—— is the Commander-in-Chief. He keeps a tobacco shop across the street. Nice General for your f—— army!" He has Tom Clarke searched and snatches scarfs from men here and there. A police inspector arrives and eyes

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him coldly. The Volunteers are marched away. They look back at the officer and mutter: "A dark night, a dark lane, a stout stick—and that fellow!" Years later the officer's dark night comes: he is shot dead in County Wicklow. But that morning he has the laugh of them all, a warrior who should make Mars vomit, laughing at the vanishing lines of marching Volunteers under heavy guard, Tom Clarke smiling proudly, MacDermott limping painfully, Edward Daly, Clarke's nephew, pale and determined beside him, and Michael Collins all unknown.

In the dismal rooms of Richmond Barracks, where the dark-eyed hawks of G-men pointed and pounced, we waited. . . . To the North Wall then, heavily guarded.

Heaped together in the darkened and stuffy hold with life-belts for pillows we wondered still. "They don't look an ill-nourished lot," said a soldier as we filed down the stairs, "and they can march." We dozed fitfully in the darkness while the sea gurgled beneath us, prepared for anything from a watery exit from some prowling German submarine's torpedo to an awakening in France. Murmurs in the darkness while insects bite: "We didn't think what we were about, our leaders taken and our arms and the whole organisation broken . . . no wonder the British officers were in such spirits in Richmond Barracks, they've bagged the whole Sinn Fein movement . . . oh, blast them and you, I'd do the same to-morrow . . . will they send us road-making in the war zone, do you think? . . . no, the country is still fighting . . . they'll put us in a camp until the end of the war . . . they can only do one of two things, shoot us or lock us up . . . they'll shoot Pearse and the leaders . . . bloody fools if they do, why didn't they let us walk home, then the citizens of Dublin would have torn us to pieces for them, daren't show our noses there for years

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... Christ, I wish I had a cigarette. . . ." Holyhead at dawn and the gulls and the Welsh hills. . . . The train jolts onward, packed. The light shows us grime-faced and weary-eyed. No conveniences for deportees, hold on boys or soak your breeches. Mostly we hold on and fall asleep. The train stops and guarded man for man we pass out on to the platform. News at last. Flaring green and black and red inky posters tell us the worst: IRISH REVOLT COLLAPSING . . . SMASHING THE IRISH REBELS . . . REBEL LEADERS ORDER MEN TO SURRENDER . . . END OF IRISH REVOLT (OFFICIAL) . . . INSIDE THE DUBLIN CORDON. So the world knew and England knew! England in front of the station and lining the streets knew its mind about us: "You all ought to be shot . . . stick a bayonet in them!" Glowering lines of hostile eyes and several screaming militant ancient dames. A bellicose civilian follows us up to the very gates of the former Jail, now a military detention barracks, howling for our blood. We march through and hear as we pass a Staff-Sergeant yell passionately at the civilian: "Go and fight for your f——g country! These men 'ave fought for theirs!"

It is just eight o'clock. We line up, the sergeants glaring sourly. The attempt to read our names offers too great a problem to English lips and ears: not all are Murphys and Higgins, there are the bewildering hosts of the Agnews, Coughlins, Connaughtons, Gallighers, Geoghegans, Geraghtys, Dennyans, Foys, Harpers, Haydens, Kavanaghs, Shouldices, Steinmayers, Turmleys, Tyrrells, Tuohys, Vizes, Whelans, Musgraves, Murtaghs, Nunans, Lawlors, MacDonaghs, Joyces, Sweeneys, Sullivans, Rankins, Pollards, Pooles, Prices, Ryans, Regans, Ledwiths, Lowes, Lundys, McArdles, McElligotts, Monks, Doggets, Omans, Rings, Hendersons, Helys, Hayes and the Lord knows what! We are led away to

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the cells with the five flags, thirty-five panes of glass and iron black door to think things over without any company but one slate and pencil, one bedboard, one stool, table, can, bowl and glass, our thoughts and the noises of the town in the distance. For three weeks it is almost a solitary confinement without a book or news of the outside world except the silent march round the stone exercise-ground. On the landing above, however, an Irish sergeant abolished this regime off his own bat, leaving some doors open, bringing in papers and tobacco, arguing with his prisoners and telling them that if they only said they had come out to fight Carson and the aristocracy no one could lay a finger on them. He held long and animated arguments with his charges on the rights and wrongs of the European War, quoting the papers verbatim and maintaining the German armies were mostly paper armies and the alleged casualties of the Allies paper losses. He had lost one eye in the Dardanelles but that had only made him more prone to twinkle all the more in the remaining eye. He was all for the Rebels in his wing and told the sergeants in the other part of the prison that they had only a miserable gang of harmless suspects but he had under him the Real Stuff, men who had fought and fired off rifles and had seen Pearse and O'Rahilly in uniform in the burning G.P.O. itself, and cursing the powers that had starved him on his transport back from the Dardanelles he went down the passages humming *The Soldiers' Song*. If his charges had only waited "for the war to stop," he had no particular objection to insurrections and tricolours. And finding some thirsty and gloomy prisoners on his landing, free, gratis and for nothing, he left in a bottle of whisky and told them all the news he could.

But this was only an oasis in the desert of silence and solitary confinement. It was for the most part an un-

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premeditated solitary confinement. Our khaki guardians came round to give us mugs and mattresses and to examine the cells: it took them the best part of a week to adjust themselves completely to the invasion. "What caused the riots? What caused the riots?" they asked on the first morning. I remember being rudely awakened that morning by two sergeants and a parrot-nosed Civilian Subordinate in blue rushing in at an unearthly hour to shake me to wakefulness and roar indignantly: "Get up, get up, God—— you!"

We heard early that we must shine the tins until we could see our faces therein, must fold our blankets along certain lines, keep our cells as clean as pins, listen to what the Staff had to say to us, preserve the strictest military discipline with silence, not whistle or sing, not attempt to communicate with the other prisoners, not look out the windows under penalties of bread and water and an appearance before the Commandant.

"What brought you into this?" asked a tall lance-corporal curiously the first day. I told him I belonged to the Irish Volunteers and naturally went out with them, and we had as good a case as his. He nodded curiously, yes, yes, but at this time, a war on . . . military had too much on their hands to think of bothering with us. . . . He shakes his head and goes out. . . . The Staff himself arrived, his moustaches finely waxed and paternal and sorrowful:

"Deary me, deary me, and 'ow did you get into this mess? Another good Irish name. Yes, my lad, I can spell it. Deary me, deary me, why ever didn't you wait until the war stopped?" He goes out, his fair head and moustaches drooped and at half-mast for the folly of the Irish. Even his years in India have confronted him with no such madness. . . . With vulture eyes and beetroot face another sergeant came, saying he was a Roman



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Catholic and his sister kept a pub at the North Wall, Dublin, and for a consideration it would be quite easy to enjoy a smoke up the grating there. . . . Whenever he left anything, at wide intervals, in the course of his duties in the cell, he interrogated himself and then presented himself with a handsome testimonial as to his kindness in the treatment of the wild Irish. We had been told to hand over all our money as we entered but had kept some.

Mainly four half-crowns Willie Pearse had handed to us with a queer smile the morning after the night in the Rotunda Gardens. "Take it," he said, "you will need it." Then he looked away down the street, and remembered the swearing maniac the night before. Nothing much would happen to the rank-and-file, he thought, and then shook his head and fell indifferent. We lost sight of him after the flock of hawk-eyed detectives in Richmond Barracks. The half-crowns remained in our pockets until one day these keepsakes vanished from our pockets after a visit to the baths where we held a long argument with one, Sergeant Moulton. We thought the vulture-eyed one swooped in our absence although when we mentioned our loss he sighed over the wickedness of those military prisoners who had been cleaning the passages while we were in the baths. Sergeant Moulton smiled a shocked smile when we told him of the loss and he acquitted the prisoners with a sceptical grin. But we forgave the vulture-eyed one for the information he had casually let drop that he had an extra pair of eyes in his posteriors and only wished these eyes had not been so slack when we had left keepsakes in waistcoats in all innocence.

Time vanished for the three weeks of solitary confinement, and nothing remained in the world but sunlight on the wall and meal-times and a recalling of every word I

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had ever read and every scene I had ever known and moments of conversations with the cleaners through the peep-holes where I spent many hours when not walking up and down. In the accomplishments of scrubbing floors I found a new excitement and a pride as I pinned the last pool of water in the last corner while, when the chaplain had prayer-books served out half-way through these three weeks, I found much pleasure and profit in the Seven Penitential psalms. Exercise of an hour and then a half-hour again of running, walking and running round and round a series of stone geometrical monstrosities in the barrack yard by comparison was a joyless diversion. We were isolated from each other, in spite of an attempt to tap Morse messages through the walls and morning whispers and one glimpse in the second week in the chapel where, as a reward for our good conduct, "Hail Glorious St. Patrick" was played on the harmonium and our eyes were gladdened by the auburn beard of Darrell Figgis, whom a sergeant told us had confessed to the Commandant that he was the bloke that had started the whole business, and the Commandant, a most courteous man, had immediately separated him from the other prisoners at exercise and shoved him into a cell with a china tea-pot and the company of another literary gentleman who also claimed to have started it all, quite unaware that Darrell and the other gentleman could not bear each other and had perforce now to play chess together until the Commandant paid them another visit and had another argument with them about the rights and wrongs of rebellion against the State. Darrell's appearance in the role of inspirer of the revolt surprised nor annoyed no one. But his temporary appearance as a pious Catholic annoyed several wits who, at a later stage, brought him the compliments of the chaplain and a request from him that he should please call all the men together to find out how many were in the state of

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grace, the chaplain being so busy that he wished to reduce the number of unnecessary confessions, and if Mr. Figgis would get all in the state of grace to fall out to the right, and the opposite to the left, the chaplain would be much obliged to him. Darrell was going ahead in all seriousness when a second message was concocted from the chaplain which saved him.

The life of the deportee has been often told, and these pages need not be cumbered with that tale again. Two incidents stood out in my mind of the days before we went away to internment in Frongoch, after an interval, when the cell doors had been thrown open and we enjoyed political prisoners' treatment inside the old jail. One night before the solitude had been broken down and we had definite news of anything, I sat in the cell, ignorant yet of even the end of the insurrection or the executions or whether we should stay here all our days, with merely a feeling that all the world I had known had ended. All the horror of the Dublin scene returned. All the depression of the surrender and the hours since and the foolish remark of a sergeant in O'Connell Street for some reason came into my thoughts: "Old Casement had a bullet put through him when he landed in Kerry. He's done for anyhow." Whether the sergeant believed this or not, or whether he said it to annoy his prisoners or whether it was the wish being father to the word I never knew. But round his words shaped a vivid picture of the landing of Casement, a red light flashing over the seas, and one more tragic failure. A load was lifted off my spirits with the picture: in a vivid flash I knew that Nineteen Sixteen belonged to history and this tale of Pearse and Casement would never be forgotten. But what the future would be I could not tell with the conflict in my mind which had come to life in the General Post Office.

Some days afterwards when the cell doors had been

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opened and we spent much time in the exercise yard the future walked beside me and spoke to me and I knew it not. The deported were relieving their feelings in impromptu football matches with makeshift paper balls. A frenzied mass of swearing, struggling, perspiring men rolled and fought over the ball in the middle of the yard. From the din a tall, wiry, dark-haired young man emerged and his Cork accent dominated the battle for a moment. He went under and rose and whooped and swore with tremendous vibrations of his accent and then disappeared again. "That's Mick Collins," I was told, but the name meant nothing. As I returned to the main building with the others I noticed him again. He smiled, stretched out his hand and pleasantly inspected the book I was carrying, the autobiography of the well-known Irish writer, Canon O'Leary. Collins glanced quickly through the pages, making quick comments. This very trivial incident would have passed out of my mind long ago only it is linked with another meeting in Cullenswood House on our return to Dublin when Collins entered a room, lifted a book and a newspaper, again rattled out quick comments and went on to talk of other things. In Stafford he often dominated the exercise ground with his voice in protest or jest.

In batches we were transferred to Frongoch after due notices that we "were of hostile associations and reasonably suspected of having favoured, promoted or assisted an armed rebellion against his Majesty." We refused to fill up any forms demanding our release or saying that we had been offered the opportunity of doing so. The Camp was a disused distillery and I spent about three days and a month there. The Camp has been often described, and there is little of interest in my memory until one day I go on a trip to London. It was a habit with me in those times to keep a diary for want of something better to do. With the help of my unwritten diary of the time as

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well as the written one this is how it fared with me from

*July 20, 1916.*

Go on London trip. Through the green of Wales which smacks of Wicklow, well-guarded to the city I have not seen since July two years before, no September two years now I come to reckon it, it seems centuries for since Stafford and the Camp the world seems to have been standing still. To a motor-bus while passing soldiers call out to our guards: "You are in nobby company to-day." Through unknown London streets in an unknown part of London, not London of childhood only seen in summer trips since with memories fading. How strange to hum through the London streets in wartime with khaki and bayonets beside you. Far cry from the Old Garden in Brockwell Park and the arguments with the Christian Brothers in what is now Ruskin Park. Is Brother George whaling German backsides somewhere as he whaled ours in the long ago? No, too old. Into Wormwood Scrubbs, a lean-faced warder glaring and a carbuncled-necked warder highly indifferent. All property handed over and placed in small bags. Comparative quiet, even more so than in Stafford in the early days. Convict garb everywhere and wild distorted faces through the windows beside each cell. Read the sentences. A man released to-morrow after fifteen years. Nice world to go back to. Would have hailed it as Paradise three months ago. Well, what do you think of it young man asks the warder who hears my story of the Dublin revolt. So we all had guns. Seeing life, eh, no, this ain't no life for no one. Blue coats, keys jingling, three shelves, regulations, six books mostly religious, awful pietistic tripe, what wouldn't I have given for the Bible though some months ago. *Friday, 21.* Examined in due course

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while the warder of the night before sympathises and the lean-faced yellow Press limb of stupidity glowers and mutters. Saw William O'Brien in the exercise ring this morning. Paternal examination. Usual questions. *Thursday, 27.* Released after great fight for my towels with the Welsh sergeant.

Return through Wales. Songs, arguments, sleep on boat, songs entering harbour, never expected to see Ireland for a decade, perhaps in way won't, for somehow or other Dublin will always be another city now with so much and many blown away. Saint Enda's again. Girls from Rathfarnham ask us about several others in the camp: "They should all be here soon for yous had the bad name." Bad name never saluted the police. P.H. on principle would never light up at night and always rode on the footpath; so did his Dogs and much the Fat Sergeant cared but that meddlesome devil did who way-laid every one round Terenure. Not far from the bog himself, that's what Napper Tandy told him the night he left a bit of his coat with him. In Rathfarnham the people have turned round in our favour and quizz the lads who didn't come out. View ruins of city before we go on to Saint Enda's. Meet the Reddins at Mass. Revisiting school, a melancholy tour yet realise nothing. Dream sensation still endures. Might be a rush of boys in any minute. Pearse's study very silent. Pausing in his bedroom I stooped and kissed his pillow. A dream surely, no, inevitable end. Only for two shattered doors and cupboard in Study Hall all as before we went away. The days pass. Decide to go in for the Degree Examination. Anything but this stillness. Visitors. Shown to two bloody Englishmen by Mrs. Pearse as specimen of mad Sinn Feiner. They are polite but watch out for the bomb in my pockets. Like my friend Dathi when shown by his mother to the Unionist lady: "My God, was it

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children like that who raped all those women ?” George Roberts arrived with his golden beard and pigeon eyes. The friend of authors, volcanic beneath his Ulster smile, am to visit him later in his Dun at Dalkey. George not strong on dogma but loves true religion and undefiled. He has visited all the 1916 widows with literary remains already, agreements in his pockets. He comforts the afflicted with dreams of royalties. He and his shade of Berkeley, one Hone and Lysaght the Gael. They’d all go a long time beside a stone wall before they’d take a bite out of it. Mrs. Pearse puts her foot down about the Autobiography. Read this later and wonder why. Only a scruple about mentioning some of his relatives still alive. But he meant it for publication for there is nothing that could offend or titillate the gossips. Otherwise he would never have said there was more poetry than truth in this autobiography. Only up to his tenth year though there are later references. Pity he had to finish the pamphlets and had to leave this. Also that a page of the *Singer* was burned in the fires. Mrs. Pearse has many scruples about publishing something that might make people “say Pat said this or that.” Nervous over the criticisms of Griffith in his Irish writings. Minds more than Griffith would mind. Visitors and again visitors. They walk through the lonely house and ask questions, touching this book and that. Some self-styled “Catholic” rag in Scotland is voiding its guts on the 1916 leaders. Pearse, a pagan, MacDonagh, a suicide. Piles of letters to Mrs. Pearse: a poem from an old man down the country:

*Kings with plumes may adorn their hearse,  
But angels meet the soul of Patrick Pearse!*

Also amazing epic in country paper about the siege of the Post Office, thousands of cavalry it appears charged

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the building, "dying and dead to bite de dust aroun' de Gay Pay Oh." Jack arrives smiling bitterly. Hates to hear his poem recited. God forgive us for all the poetry we wrote when under key. Pearse used to say that 1916 would rid Ireland of some bad poets if it did nothing else, but his calculations went astray. Jack smiles when I tell him the cross-Channel papers say the rebels were all poets: "Are you one?" he asks. Down in Dublin the tide runs fast. Last night several Volunteer officers on the run drop into the Hermitage, and away again to sleep in some small camp among the hills. G-men plump, tall and hawk-eyed hover and stroll through the city. Visit a Fête, a blaze of tricolours spreading fast. In groups released men and citizens argue and argue: was it better to be shot with Pearse or jailed with MacNeill? Voices raised stoutly in defence of MacNeill and Griffith. Viper whispers: MacNeill was bought by English gold, he informed the Castle about the Rising. He had signed the Proclamation. Hobson. The released men and others squelch this talk with quick looks and terse words. The tale spreads: when MacNeill heard that Maxwell had had a pit dug for fifty, lime complete, he wrote and asked for a place in it. "We are a tame lot," says another voice. "Why didn't someone shoot Maxwell before he left?" Tell this to Godfrey, the plump medical, when I visit him. Godfrey has a collection of bones which he examines with racy comments. He asks why the whoreson didn't stop talking and plug the old bandjax himself. It was a lady's voice. Trust them, said Godfrey. They are writing letters to many of the released men saying they all ought to be shot for leaving the other poor fellows behind and promising to behave for the future. This after all the trouble we gave in refusing to fill up any forms. Meet a member of the MacNeill party whom the ladies say was locked up by



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his wife although he was always making wonderful orations and had his photo painted in oils looking a regular Wolfe Tone in his Volunteer uniform before the scrap. He tells me of the letters and we talk away. He grows serious and says he hates all women except his wife. He thinks the 1916 widows have let him down badly. He goes away repeating slowly they have let me down. Meet Alice later. She is sad and silent except when an unfortunate who had not answered the call appears. Why didn't she herself I wonder as the malicious questions rattle on and the unfortunate wriggles and blushes. Hear later she couldn't. Sat silent watching the positions. . . . Would have gone in if she could. Silent all the day after MacDonagh was shot. Never stopped talking since. Weary of this Dublin with its undercurrents of hate "burning in the fires of a slanderous tongue." Again this evening a group gabbles about MacDermott's jokes to his court-martial: made them try him seven times, why didn't he have the glory of dying right away. Oh, I'd like to glory some of you with a half-dozen of Mills bombs, so I would. Wonder much. Circles and insistent things. A pleasant interlude: the ladies, thank God, are not all widows yet. Some of the Yank's friends arrive and in a pleasant interval I show them the peaches in the greenhouse but they decline to be shown the croquises and depart declaring it is easy to shake me out of my pensiveness. Yank in his next letter from the Camp says he'll climb into my ear when he gets out if I don't leave his mots severely alone. So on till October and I pass the B.A. exam.

## THIRTEEN



BY Christmas nearly all the Dogs were united again under the roof of Cullenswood House for the Hermitage was closed down for the moment. The school was restarted and when the last internee left Frongoch, deserted at Christmas, the Dogs decided to have a hooley for the Lord alone knew when Sla and Hurricane Hal would be released from Dartmoor, but to take their places were Spud and the bold Dennis Bracken. The Yank felt lonely without Sla, but reckoned he couldn't go into mourning for the poor old son of a bee. So the bold Gulkin turned up with his old Tin Lizzie and said: "Boys, you've had a rough time. Let's have a night down on the old farm." And the Fat Rat read them all a lecture for being foolish young fellows, but Yam and the Gulkin fell on him and bejaney they near throttled the life out of him, and asked him what did he do in the Little War, daddy, and how would he ever look his grandchildren in the face for not marching into the fray with Bighead down his quarter of the world, but the Fat Rat stood by what he said and said his views were well known, but his heart had bled for them all as he watched the fires in a big field the whole week. They told him to cut out the sob stuff and gave him a boot behind, and they all got into the old Tin Lizzie together with three cheers for themselves and the Gulkin who made the old farm in two shakes of a cow's tail. Dinniper was there mighty solemn, for he was off on some new racket this time, and bejakers he was so glum that you could nip straws with his antimacassar; so the Yank said it was time that Dinniper should be taken

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in hand instead of mooning his life out, and what he wanted was some goddamned *joie de vivre*. So after they had all been dancing and singing and talking over all the old times and Pete and the great week itself, what must the Yank do but dare the bold Dinniper to have a glass of the hard stuff. So Dinniper had one, and liked it, and said the Yank was his Guardian Angel, and of course Dinniper, who did nothing by halves, must have another, and when the Yank dared him to finish that decanter before him bejakers he had it polished off before you could wink and that put some petrol in Dinniper's Tin Lizzie, I'm telling you, for he got mighty eloquent and tried to address them all in Chinese and wanted to kiss all the girls there, and would have begod only the fifteen years' old what's name began to work and down he went bang on the floor saying to the Yank: "By the Holy Poker you may be my Guardian Angel but some So-and-so here has made me drunk!" So the Gulkin came in very wrathful and said it was a shame to set poor Dinniper off for he couldn't carry it and hardly knew the taste of a drop, and carried Dinniper upstairs to bed over his shoulder, and the Fat Rat and his other brother, the Devil, said it was a bloody shame; and the girls, who all had a soft spot for Dinniper, were shocked to see the poor lad go all to pieces like that, and it threw a gloom over them for at least half an hour and they gave the Yank a bit of their minds, and said he ought to be ashamed to start off a poor lad who had only known the taste of coffee till then; but the Yank said he *was* sorry, for Dinniper would never stop once he started till he drained the Liffey dry and danced on the banks. Never any moderation about that guy in anything. Then the Yank smiled his smile that had melted so many tender hearts in its time, for even while he was locked up he had thirteen proposals of marriage from the States, and the girls relented, but were mighty solemn for another

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while, when they cheered up and said right out: "Well, after all, Wolfe Tone himself got drunk!" So begod the dark cloud lifted from the assembly and they went at it heel and toe until the dawn and you could hear the shrieks of the Fat Rat escaping from the Dog Himself and Yam and the Gulkin a mile down the road. And in the morning Dinniper got up and had two baths and two breakfasts and the Gulkin answered several phone calls inquiring about the poor lad's health. And the Yank said some sons of bees had all the luck and he'd climb into the ear of the first guy who mentioned the deplorable exhibition the night before from their friend Dinniper of whom they all expected better things, and the Gulkin and the Devil told Dinniper not to worry, but take a hair of the dog that bit him. And he did begod—the best action of his life—for becripes he was getting impossible.

The next thing he and the bold Dennis Bracken were painting the town red and coming home footless together, out on the blind, elephants, every other night. There was nothing wrong with Dennis B. except that he had missed the bloody racket and thought it a reflection on himself just like his friend the Alph, who'd been on the flat of his back during the scrap, but blamed himself for not being there. So between arguing with the Alph and listening to the honest artisans singing to the honey bees over their pints in this pub and that pub and the next pub, Dinniper was soon on the mend, though the Lord knows what was up with him in the first place except something he called his soul, and Dennis B. said for the sake of the fifteen squinting, club-footed orphans of the jumped-up militiaman to tie three knots in it and throw it in the Liffey and have another. Dennis B. saved his blessed life for otherwise he would have gone on reading books about spiritualism and Russian novels and ended up in John of God's. There is no place like the pubs of Dublin for lads who

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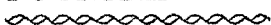
have bats in their attics and it would be the mercy of God if all public men in the city of Dublin were compelled by law to spend a year's probation in the pubs of Dublin and were then exiled for ten years before they were allowed on any platform, for then they would know something about Ireland and not think the sun rose in their back gardens and that the world was hanging on their words. A few pages of the Liffeside *Decameron* would take some of the starch out of those fellows. And that reminds me of the next excursion of Dinniper and Dennis B. After they had sampled all the pubs they thought they ought to visit the *salons* and see how the political world was going on, for one can see too much of low life and even a good thing can be overdone. Bejaney, they were sorry they didn't stop in the pubs at first. For in the *salons* they met lads who spoke like President Wilson and looked through them and asked in a loud voice: "Who are those two young men? Have they evah done anything for Ahland?" And young ones talking fifteen to the dozen, and serious six-footers with waving beards who hated each other like poison and thanks be to heaven a few gunmen with a revolver in each pocket, the best of the lot, and a crowd of gazaboos with the limelight on them for ever and ever. But the queerest merchant they struck was the bold Ignatius, who had five brothers in the Church, and it should be the other way round, the five in the world, and Ignatius locked up in a Trappist monastery. He'd do no harm there instead of wagging round Dublin giving out his codology and telling us what every sensible person in the country had known for years and years. The only way to stop him was to bring out the Liffeside *Decameron* or the vernacular, and then you couldn't see him for dust, and off with him to hammer out some open letter to some bishop or other on his old tipper-tap. It was no use telling him he was a fanatic. That made him purr like a

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family of cats, for he was rushing round the place making speeches and raising ructions to further orders. When he went into any prison the Governor swooned and the lads all said: "Good-bye to the quiet times!" The pair of them could never teach Ignatius the jolly old *joie de vivre*.

And there was not much *joie de vivre* after that, for dark clouds came down over Dublin and the Dogs scattered all over Ireland. The Yank had to cross the seas and ended up in the American Army. The Dog Himself went up the country, and spent the rest of his life on the run, walled up from the Black and Tans when they came, and leading columns over the mountains, and hunger-striking and all the rest of it. Dinniper took to the pen, and Yam got so hot in himself that after a bit the bloody Government sent him over the seas to cool his heels. And there arose another generation that knew not Joseph. And that is the last of the Dogs in this book, thank Heaven.

## FOURTEEN



IN a Rathmines basement in the January of 1917 I attended a remarkable meeting. It was my second or third visit to that basement, and there I had met D. L. Kelleher for the first time, writing poems, while Con O'Leary laughed at the groans of Kelleher as the landlady, Ma Power, kept talking at the door and interrupting the rhymes and muse of D. L. Kelleher. Con used to sit at his table to all hours of the night writing his *Exile's Bundle*. When he moved out to Sandymount some time later after his return from the nightly grind of a Dublin newspaper, he wrote as if every moment were his last about the Leaside folk . . . but at this moment he was only a chorus of laughter to the groans of Kelleher. Kelleher had the sublimest indifference to all the political bats that were then whizzing about my garret and the most magnificent and fanciful vocabulary I had ever met. He would dash off an epigram a second and the epigrams would fly round Dublin and across Europe for years and hit him between the eyes at some out-of-the-way shrine or mountain and lake when he least expected it. He told me to quit chasing the bats that annoyed me so much and write down all the sayings of Pearse that I could remember and throw them into a box and look them up in due course and write a book about them. Everything under the sun was pulled to pieces at that Rathmines table except God and Cork, which Kelleher would never allow. The friends of Kelleher cover the earth, and once in London, years later, we were having tea together and I had inflicted many questions on Kelleher about the future

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of Ireland, and Kelleher had sent up several verbal rockets to make me talk about something else, and in the whirl and colour of his speech I had quite forgotten the woes of Ireland, when a sad and quiet Italian passed and saluted Kelleher. "That," said Kelleher, "is the last man who got out of Smyrna when the Turks burned it." A jolly Irish voice sounded behind us and a hefty Southern Unionist sat down beside us and enjoyed the speech of Kelleher until Kelleher introduced me to him in these terms: "This fellow was out on the rampage with Pearse in 1916, but now he has gone flat and that's why he knocks round with the likes of me!" The Southern Unionist jumped a foot in the air and said: "Good God! You never know who you are speaking to!" And Kelleher grinned and said in mighty enjoyment: "Watch your step. Ryan might pull a bomb out of his pocket." And then Kelleher talked the head off the two of us. I nearly gave Dinniper's friend, Ignatius, a fit once by quoting Kelleher. Ignatius was on his high horse about the Treaty in Bewley's Café in Westmoreland Street, and Kelleher had just left me amidst a shower of adjectives, so plunging back into my memory I gave Ignatius one fair and square on the solar plexus with: "Kelleher has just said that all you idealists infringe Christ's copyright." That held up the argument, for Ignatius could only gasp after an interval of two minutes: "He had no copyright." I have never seen him so shaken before or since. But such sayings with Kelleher are three a penny. In the January of 1917, Kelleher had summoned his meeting to found a society to watch the files of country newspapers for Hidden Genius . . . Thirty-two Counties, Thirty-two members, each a County. . . . T. C. Murray, the dramatist, took the chair, and Kelleher made a long speech to explain that in all the country newspapers poets and writers were hidden and lost for want of encouragement,



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and if the thirty-two members would search the columns of their counties and got in touch with the writers approved by the thirty-two, then such writers might be hailed and encouraged, and even a volume published by the united efforts of the society. The society only met twice again, for its members had enough Hidden Genius to supply two cities for several decades. T. C. Murray was then the most famous member of the society: he afterwards wrote *Autumn Fire*. Kelleher himself sat down and turned Cork into a ballad, *Padna*. He wrote an earlier version which was sold out in a fortnight, but when he wanted it republished all the satisfaction he got was a letter from a sad publisher, who said that the poem was a work of genius and he would like to republish it, but his firm had the proud boast that all their publications could be read aloud at the convent dining-table in the presence of the most scrupulous Reverend Mother, and Kelleher had used the expression: "God damn this vest"—so with every regret, etc. By the next post Kelleher had transmitted the opinion to a learned Dominican, who replied that whoever saw evil in this poem had a yellow streak, and without comment the opinion was again sent to the publisher, who sighed but did nothing.

One reason the society found little poetry to republish was that the poets of Ireland at that time had quitted the columns of the country newspapers and betaken themselves in very large numbers to ballad sheets. These ballad sheets hung all along the Rathmines Road and round Harcourt Street and in all the small shops of Dublin; but for the most part, though sometimes a jewel gleamed from a window, the poets were either copy-cats of the singers of other days, borrowing metre and even sentences from them, or flat topical jinglers, and perished with the day. Then Kelleher himself gathered a band of poets together, not more than a dozen, and issued a monthly

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poetic four-page magazine, *Angus*. And though *Angus* was hopelessly outnumbered by the ballad sheets in the windows, the contributors all lived to sing another day, including Con O'Leary and Richard Rowley.

Dublin about this time enjoyed thrills and rumours of further risings. St. Patrick's Day and public holidays were the favourite dates, while military proclamations studded the walls on the slightest provocation. The Volunteer organisation stirred to life again and its banned uniform was to be seen in many processions. In Cullenswood House I came in touch with Michael Collins, who sometimes used a small office downstairs. My picture of him as he then was I have written in *The Invisible Army*. There were two Micks as you watched him in his small office, one, the jolly gasconading, hard-swearing, good fellow; the other, a dour, quiet man who lived with his life in his hand, heroic, dignified, a thinker, a fighter, a mystery. In the dark and restless days after the insurrection he emerged, and already in Cullenswood House it was evident that he was not only a guiding intelligence in the political and guerilla struggle but a romantic and mysterious and inspiring figure. Within two years a legend had gathered round his name. To his friends in Dublin he was "Mick"; to the outside world he was a new edition of the Scarlet Pimpernel and De Wet rolled into one. At the first glance there was a swaggering aggressiveness about him, that roistering Gascon overbearing manner which made Cathal Brugha declare: "He was made a romantic figure, a mystical character such as this person certainly is not." A brave, bitter little pill was Cathal Brugha, "the foxy-haired, furtive-eyed leader of the irreconcilable gunmen," as the *Morning Post* described him with the clarity of hate, a judgment more affectionately confirmed by the words of ex-President Cosgrave: "Except for war he is not worth a

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damn for anything else, but that he is a great man for war I bear witness to, because even when the spark of life was practically gone out of him he was as full of fight as when he was going into it." After Michael Collins had heard the worst that Brugha had to tell him publicly about himself, he turned to his friend and biographer, Piaras Beaslai, and said: "In spite of all he has said, I have still a sneaking regard for Cathal!" For the little russet-haired man with the piercing eyes of blue and the seventeen wounds was as great a man and legend as Mick himself: all Dublin knew the legend which repeated itself in Cathal Brugha's last hour: alone he stood in the South Dublin Union at Easter 1916, a revolver in each hand, and drove back the attackers and sank riddled behind his barricade, and when his comrades rushed to him, asked them to sing "God Save Ireland" while he died; but he lived to die, revolver spitting defiance at the green-coated troops of Michael Collins's army in June 1922, in O'Connell Street, "as full of fight as when he was going into it."

With the clarity of hate, Cathal Brugha described Michael Collins and said the worst that could ever be said of him: "I don't know to whom he referred when he mentioned this word 'bullies.' Possibly he may have referred to me as being one of them. In the ordinary way I would take exception and take offence at such a term being applied to me, but the amount of offence I would take at it would be measured by the respect or esteem that I had for the character of the person who made the charge. In this particular instance I take no offence whatever. Now the Minister of Finance (Collins) says something about Tammany Hall methods. I know nothing about them. Possibly he does. . . . Can it be authoritatively stated that he ever fired a shot at any enemy of Ireland? . . . Well, what exactly am I going

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to say to you? That Michael Collins does not occupy that position in the army that newspaper men said he did. . . . Mr. Michael Collins might very well say, 'Save me from my friends. . . .' If Eamonn de Valera did not happen to be President, who would have kept Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins and myself together?"<sup>1</sup>

These random phrases, which certainly do not convey the fine personality of the speaker or do justice to the case he makes at length in the speeches from which they are taken, do suggest the Devil's Advocate's brief against Michael Collins: his bullying manner, his underground methods, the newspaper legends about him, only true in part, which ignored his very greatness. It is true that he fired very few shots in his life: Easter 1916 and one ambush are the only battles his enemies will allow him. It was the tradition to call him a bully, and as one watched him in his office in Cullenswood House the tradition was understandable, for his manner and language when unpunctuality was in question would have made the peppery Colonel of legend swoon with horror and dismay. But had Michael Collins only written over his office door: "Brisker and Better Revolutions," his sensitive critics might have understood him better, and it must be added he always fought his match. His scowl and his fist hammering on the table and his tornadoes of oaths and epithets were reserved for those of the highest rank in the movement. If you visited him in one of his offices and heard him addressing some visitor in terms of unmeasured fury with "these bloody fellows" and "lousers" singeing the air and his watch flourished with fury in that visitor's face, it was a safe bet that the victim was a man very high in the Irish Republican Army who quite understood Mick's little way. If Collins was laughing and making withering personal remarks about

<sup>1</sup> Laughter, *Treaty Debate*, pp. 277-370.

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his visitor's capacity or courage or efficiency, it was another safe bet that his visitor was at the very least a Cabinet Minister in the Dail. On the other hand, if you heard Collins talking with humility, deference, and almost obsequiousness to his visitor, the one so honoured was sure to be an obscure figure in the world of Sinn Fein. And he was capable of the most generous and thorough-going apologies for his outbursts, saying with outstretched hand and a winning smile that he had been wrong and that he knew he was a hard man to work with. And Mick only swore for fun. It was like watching a juggler to listen to his outbursts—outbursts violent, grotesque, ever witty and vivid, never commonplace nor sordid. A twinkle came into his eyes after these wordy bouts, almost a twinkle at his own expense. His offices were models of order and neatness. He often worked ten, fifteen or eighteen hours a day, and when he was seriously ill his friends had to use both force and guile to persuade him to stop. "Mick is a lion for work," they said, liking him none the less when he roared like a whole den of lions ready to devour Daniels, real and spurious.

Two legends survived from that Easter Week whence Collins emerged as the most bewildering figure that Ireland has ever known. In one Collins was represented as being the most sensitive in his reaction to the horrors of the fight, almost frozen to horror by a sudden realisation of the blood, flame and doom of the Post Office. In the second, some hours later in the retreat from the burning Post Office through Moore Lane, another Michael Collins emerged, a truculent, dashing fighter in his green uniform, who swore tremendously and shepherded men past a fire-swept barricade, storming defiance at the flying bullets. These stories as told by men who were beside him have each the ring of truth. For here, suddenly,

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Michael Collins grew to greatness, some spark in his soul blazed to splendour, and as the Easter Week leaders marched to their death, whatever fates guard Ireland reached out and quietly draped a mantle of leadership around the silent, grim young man watching political detectives picking out his comrades for the firing parties and the prison cell. The hawks never deigned to swoop on Collins, although one snatched Sean MacDermott from his side as they were marching to the boat. So he was deported to Stafford where I first saw him, although I had been in the Post Office with him and through the retreat in Moore Lane. This meeting I have already mentioned, and my liking for him awakened by the contrast in his comments on a book, quick, intelligent, serious speech, a kindliness, a force from the roaring giant of some moments before under the mass of frenzied footballers. In Cullenswood House he entered a room, lifted a book and a newspaper and rattled out his quick comments, and went on to talk of other things, but in between the real Michael Collins flashed an unforgettable impression upon my mind. He threw down the book of poems with the merry judgment, for he was in one of his most boisterous moods: "Ah, Swinburne! That's the melodious old bandjax, with no sense in his words at all!" Mick laughed uproariously and lifted the newspaper, still thinking of the poets: "Do you know Kelly and Burke and Shea, 'The Fighting Race,' now there's a fine poem if you like." Mick grew silent and read the newspaper, which was an old copy of the Gaelic League organ with the famous article in which Pearse announced the founding of the Irish Volunteers, "The Coming Revolution," the very one the orator in Sean O'Casey's *Plough and the Stars* draws upon to embellish his rhodomontade. The article ends: "We must accustom ourselves to the thought of arms, to the sight of arms, to the use of arms.

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We may make mistakes in the beginning and shoot the wrong people; but bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing, and the nation which regards it as the final horror has lost its manhood. There are things more horrible than bloodshed; and slavery is one of them." These words Collins read aloud with a sudden passion which transformed him from the easy and almost cynical man of a moment before into another, tense, enthusiastic, jaw set and eyes on fire. The veil fell again, Collins told a funny story, chatted and swept out.

An official description of Michael Collins issued by the British Military Headquarters is said to have thus described him: "A surly-looking, fresh-complexioned individual with a harsh accent. He is rather fastidious about his neckware, and has a weakness for silver-headed walking-sticks." In reality he was manly-looking, wiry and energetic in frame, a manner lively among intimates but in public somewhat reserved, betimes aloof but with the suggestion of incalculable reserve force. Fair-haired, broad-featured with two humorous grey-blue eyes which sometimes burned to amber a-gleam in his pallid face on which was stamped unusual character and determination. When excited he spoke with a loud and pronounced Cork accent.

At that moment when Collins read out that characteristic extract from Pearse in his militant mood, any auditor might have been excused for placing Collins on a pedestal in history near to Pearse, in making this person the mystical and romantic figure Cathal Brugha declared he certainly was not. The auditor would have remembered something else besides the spark from Pearse which lighted Collins: Collins was just then reorganising the Irish Republican Army shattered by the insurrection, and he, like Pearse, was also Director of Organisation of that body. Like Pearse, Collins was also vital and ambitious

and strong-willed. There the resemblance ended and an instructive contrast began. Collins himself never claimed Pearse as the source of his inspiration. Rather, if his writings are any guide, he looked to Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott. He was no dreamer, and a more practical and ruthless man in his methods than Pearse, whose learning and idealism he lacked. At this moment he was regarded as the very incarnation of out-and-out physical force Republicanism, and an amusing story was told of an encounter between himself and Arthur Griffith at a meeting. Griffith sat quietly while Collins broke out fiercely: "This Sinn Fein stunt is all bloody balderdash! We want a Republic!" Griffith fixed him with an ironical and inimical glance and a pitying smile. Collins relented and added: "Of course I don't know much about Sinn Fein." Griffith shrugged his shoulders and said acidly: "Evidently not, Mr. Collins, or you wouldn't talk like you do." Michael Collins though he was building up an army and running a revolution on business lines, still retained the tempestuous and aggressive manner which had marked him as an exile in London. Once he had startled a London-Irish club by delivering a lecture on the role of the Catholic Hierarchy in Irish history, and tradition went that he ended his address with the words: "Exterminate them!" We have his own word that in exile he resented jokes about Pat, pigs, blackthorns and whisky, and often punched the jokers on the nose for these mildewed witticisms.

The greatness of Michael Collins was not apparent to the first glance, and even his biographer, Piaras Beaslai, has confessed that when he met Collins for the first time in a Gaelic League branch in Dublin he little realised in this merry young man the future Michael Collins. There was nothing aloof about Mick, and he was no marble statue. Yet he shattered the British Secret Service and



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fought the Black and Tans to a standstill, and there was about him a spell. Sometimes the Gascon vanished and the veil lifted. It lifted for me as I listened to him that day in Cullenswood, or talked to him for odd moments in his office. There romantic rope ladders and secret inks jostled files and maps, and one caught glimpses of sailors and Volunteers, and in the midst of it all Michael Collins running his revolution beside his neat desk, and documents stacked round his typewriter and reading the *Times* and *Manchester Guardian* every morning before he launched a loan or a jail escape or a battle. That is a just picture of Collins at the time, and it was underlined by complaints from his critics that he was running the movement and doing everything on his own, and there was the usual whisper that he was a British spy, inevitable decoration of Irish leadership. Efficiency was the watchword of this hero of popular romance, and for flaming barricades and forlorn stands and rousing orations he brought—or the movement of which he was the storm centre and guide brought in this second stage of revolution—guerilla war. Instead of open insurrection Ireland turned to a smothered war. Into the movement swept Ireland with all the virtues and vices of Ireland. And through it all Michael Collins escaped raid after raid and spy after spy by the simple expedient of trusting to luck, sleeping in different houses and riding through Dublin on an ordinary push-bike. Why did he paralyse the cleverest Intelligence Agents the British Government could employ? Beaslai's two tomes tell us to-day half the answer. Collins had won over the members, or most of the important members, of the political branch of the Dublin police as well as the Royal Irish Constabulary. Whereas to some, although the thing had never been done before, Mick Collins was no longer a Scarlet Pimpernel, which would no doubt have pleased him, for

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the legends about him must have often amused him. "Oh, this literature!" I heard him sigh comically once when news was brought him that one of his Commandants, already on the run from the British, had to fly from the angry inhabitants of his native county for a realistic novel. Michael Collins's friend, Batt O'Connor, however to some extent placated the thirsters after romance when he revealed in his well-known book how he had built secret hiding-places for Collins worthy of the pages of Dumas and the Baroness Orczy. It was all very well to sneer that there is no pursuit when the hunted is in with the hounds, but there were other packs besides those the fox had won over. No foiled pursuer need ever blush as he reads Mr. O'Connor's accounts of his hiding-places and how luck favoured Collins, who missed raiders by seconds and bluffed them with audacity when he was in their hands. Mick moved freely through hotels and restaurants or cycled through the Dublin streets or attended a comrade's funeral at the height of the Terror, or went to the very gates of Mountjoy and indeed once past them and into the very cell where one of his captains lay under sentence of death, shrugging his shoulders with: "If I am taken I am taken, and that's that!" Or his eyes would glow and his voice vibrate as he told you: "I am always hopeful!"

His sense of humour never deserted him, and in his encounters with his pursuers he was so cool and impudent that they ended by seeing him everywhere. Raiding parties would dash into houses shouting his name and drag off respectable citizens who had the bad luck to resemble the one bad portrait of him the Castle had. In the hottest days of the chase, Mick boarded a tram in Dublin and sat down beside a G-man notorious for his determined pursuit of men "on the run." The G-man was well known to be a courageous man, but his feelings

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may be imagined when Mick addressed him by name, cracked cheery jokes, inquired solicitously after his family and colleagues, but with equal good humour advised him not to leave his seat until the terminus. Then with a gay but menacing wave of his hand, Mick descended at the next stop. After a raid on one of his offices he walked through the back door and joined the crowd outside. He hailed a passing side-car and drove away. "They are looking for Mick again, sir," said the unsuspecting jarvey. "Yes, they would, God blast them," said Collins, highly amused. But he enjoyed most such an incident as the military raid on another office while he was writing in an upstairs room. He looked through the windows and saw the place surrounded. A Tommy entered the room. Mick swore at him with the utmost truculence of which he was capable and then broke into an appalling tornado of oaths at the expense of the damned Sinn Feiners downstairs who were always upsetting his business. When the Tommy reported all this casually below, adding a description of Collins, a furious G-man recognised Mick and dashed upstairs to find an empty room and an open skylight. Collins on this occasion had a double escape from the Tommies, for he had first looked through a window with a rope in his hand, contemplating a drop from the window; but a Tommy on guard had failed to give the alarm, so Mick dashed over the roofs.

In the chronicle of Sion of these days with its raids and alarms and deepening struggle, another name loomed as large as that of Collins: de Valera. All the romance of Easter Week clung round his name, and Ireland was inclined to anticipate Mr. Lloyd George's famous judgment: "Thank God there is no one like him. He is unique." Ireland was not then in the mood to echo inept jokes about Spanish leaders of the Irish people, remembering Mangan and innumerable Gaelic poets

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before him had sung that Spanish ale would give us hope, while an ancient prophecy had it that a Spaniard would free Ireland. There was all the setting of understanding and romance even before Mr. de Valera had made his celebrated declaration: "I was reared in a labourer's cottage here in Ireland. I have not lived solely among the intellectuals. The first fifteen years of my life that formed my character were lived among the Irish people down in Limerick; therefore I know what I am talking about; and whenever I wanted to know what the Irish people wanted I had only to examine my own heart and it told me straight off what the Irish people wanted." At a later stage the wits of Sion called for a glass window into de Valera's heart so that all the world might share his vision. His figure had been a legendary one during Easter Week for his defence of Boland's Mill, and after stormy jail strikes Dublin had seen him arrive at Westland Row Station heading the released prisoners from penal servitude. In a night he became the leader of the movement, an enigma, a Don Quixote with the accents of Thomas Aquinas, pondering amid melodrama, marching boldly into an insurrection the wisdom of which he doubted, shrugging his shoulders at the firing squad, and breaking with the Irish Republican Brotherhood on his release, since that was the one thing he had regretted in his review of his life in what only a miracle prevented from being his condemned cell. Clare elected him by thousands. His progress all over Ireland was a triumph, and the only man who saw a chink in his armour was John Dillon, who gave strict orders to the *Freeman's Journal* that de Valera's speeches were to be reported *verbatim*. Those who worked with him declared he was a born organiser and soldier, cool and brave in a desperate situation, a blend of snow and flame, always courteous but betimes coming down like a hundred of bricks upon

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blunderers, and as obstinate as any mule upon occasion. Stone walls could not mask the romance Ireland linked with his name. More and more the populace took him to its heart, and among the poems in the shop windows I read at an early stage:

*When we were little children Johnny Redmond was a fool,  
He bade us to be satisfied with something called Home Rule.  
But we have learned a thing or two since we went to school,  
And we'll crown de Valera King of Ireland.*

A half-hearted attempt by some Republican doctrinaire songster to oust this song with another entitled *We'll make de Valera our President* yet had little success, and indeed was beside the point, for de Valera was then President.

That de Valera alone survived of the Easter Week leaders undoubtedly not only influenced Ireland profoundly but influenced himself. In Richmond Barracks awaiting death he candidly avowed that though he was ready to fight, he was glad he had not to vote for or against the Rising. He stated the same opinion in public subsequently. On a later occasion when he threw all his influence against a decision of the Irish Volunteers which would have led to serious loss of life in Dublin, one who was then a member of the Volunteer Executive told me de Valera used all his eloquence to gain his point. To reverse this decision meant the exercise of considerable courage, for the decision had been publicly announced beforehand, and there was much talk about the collapse of the Repeal Movement after O'Connell had abandoned his proclaimed meeting at Clontarf. De Valera won and Dublin was saved from a shambles in which many citizens might have perished. But as he marshalled the pros he noted the cons with the warning: "Remember I was opposed to the 1916 Rising."

Only twice did I ever meet de Valera personally, and when I think of him there is always a picture of a dark, charming and serious face bent over a paper with a pencil in his hand while he searches for a better word in the paper before him. Once Collins heard that I wanted an article from de Valera after the escape from Lincoln Prison. He sent me a cordial message that there would be no difficulty about that and to come and see him. He scribbled an introduction to de Valera on a visiting card and I went down to Greystones and waited until de Valera came in from a walk by the waves. De Valera struck me as courteous and magnetic and often since while wading through the oceans of scurrility which have been hurled against him I have felt that this was an historic occasion if de Valera's enemies are to be believed, for they all deny him any sense of humour, and de Valera on this occasion certainly had a sense of humour, rather grim to be sure, but honest humour. The article was for an English paper, and de Valera was lingering conscientiously over his phrases. Mr. Shortt, then Chief Secretary for Ireland, had kidnapped him on the "German plot" charge. He was asking what the world would think were he to kidnap Mr. Shortt on some vague and unprovable charge. He hesitated to find his example. Conniving at his escape from Lincoln? No. Adultery? No. Too earthy, perhaps offensive. Then he laughed as he found his example: "Supposing I were to accuse Mr. Shortt of dealings with the Devil." Yes. That was it. De Valera's pencil fell with decision. Then his eyes lighted with fun and he said: "That example should perhaps appeal to the English more, for though they do know that adultery exists, they are not quite so sure about the Devil!" De Valera decided to look over his article before handing it over, and I must confess I had my doubts whether de Valera would beat his enemies at this time, for I had heard

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him say in public that he had no time to hand out neatly typewritten statements in advance to the Press if the Press did not care to report his speeches verbatim.

Two days later I met Collins, who asked sharply: "Did you get that article from Dev.?" I told him de Valera was weighing a paragraph and was naturally cautious about anything he wrote. Collins scowled his famous scowl and hit the table a resounding thwack: "Keep after him! I never knew such a bloody man!" He turned back to the pile of papers before him muttering in irritation to himself. And there, had I but known, was the clash of personality and outlook which afterwards shook Ireland to the foundations, and I felt very much as a large part of Ireland has felt since: a glow of affection when one thinks of Collins; a certain puzzled respect when one considers de Valera.

During the time I knew Collins in his periodical use of his office in Cullenswood House I still continued the foolish habit of keeping a diary, as a record of opinions, prejudices and events. Aided by my memory some pages of this precious document throw some light on the Dublin of the time. Here are some entries:

*Sunday, June 10, 1917:*

After midnight. Just returned from the Abbey where I saw Frank Fay and Fred O'Donovan in *The Jackdaw*, and that curious play, *The Crusaders*. The Beresford Place meeting has been proclaimed, a poster to every yard of wall, hoarding and public building. Said it won't be held. Let's sleep on it. Later: Sleep on it, egad! Things have changed here since O'Connell and his generation. Early this morning it was expected the meeting would proceed. Went over to Church Street with a message to Father Albert. He thanked me for bringing it, and brooded in his brown habit over the

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tension in the city, disquietude in his fine dark eyes. He wondered would the meeting be held and hoped there would be no violent attempt on the police. He talked to me earnestly about the question involved and explained his thoughts that though the Volunteers had their methods, and free speech must be upheld, there were many methods of upholding it. His dark eyes shone, his noble, tapering beard seemed alive, and an eloquence crept into his voice: he would try everything: letters to papers, thousands of post cards to likely quarters, he would write to Lloyd George, yes, he would even write to Lloyd George, it gave away no case to point out right and wrong to Lloyd George, he would discharge thousands of post cards at Lloyd George and who could deny that post cards directed to that quarter might be as effective as many bricks at policemen? The shadow of the 1916 executions seemed to hang over Church Street. These brown-habited Capuchins had attended the last hour of Pearse and his comrades. Richmond Barracks flashed back into my memory as I left Father Albert. A line of weary and defiant men marching round a corner, a man's teeth chattering with fright as he mutters: "They'll shoot us when we round that bend! Can't you hear the shots?" And a laugh of pity from Eamonn Bulfin beside me: "Poor devil, he's scared!" Lonely rooms with stinking buckets after the pouncing detectives have gone out for the tenth time. The door opens and two brown-habited Capuchins with their great beards wave their hands with an honest smile: "Cheer up, men!" Smiling they pass out of sight and move calmly from room to room. Down to O'Connell Street with this old picture in my thoughts. Arrived late for the meeting. Police cordons held all approaches. Great excitement. Hear the news: crowds gathered in Beresford Place as Count Plunkett and Cathal Brugha arrived on a side-car, spoke a few words in



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defiance of the Proclamation and were duly arrested. No attempt at rescue, but an angry young man in the crowd had words with Inspector Mills and turned in a fury and fractured the Inspector's skull with a blow of a hurley. He throws down his hurley and darts into the crowd pursued by detectives. His face is pale and his eyes haunted. A detective closes in on him. He turns and draws a revolver, covering the detective with menace in his haunted eyes. The detective turns white, and with a curse the young man is lost to view. A scrimmage between the police and people follows. Mills lies on the ground unconscious. A woman in the Cumann na mBan uniform kneels beside him and bandages the Inspector's head: her brother-in-law, Eamonn Ceannt was executed in 1916. Stones fly and window-panes clatter on the pavement. Panic spreads through the streets. The children yell at the police: "Who murdered MacDonagh?" All round the city crowds lowered and muttered and shadows crept up from the slums. With clanging bell the Fire Brigade Ambulance dashes away with a savage yell behind it. By nine-thirty the streets are clear. Walk back to Cullenswood and call in to fulfil an invitation the Alph has sent me. (Alfred MacGloughlin, Pearse's nephew.) The Alph is as pale and argumentative as ever. I spout pacifism, but the Alph will have none of it. We grow abusive until Fernando arrives with two jokes and a revolver he hugs like a bride. Fernando would make peace but we unite against him and attack the I.R.A. for all we are worth. The Alph drinks cocoa and curses England and Sinn Fein up and down. Fernando strums the piano and informs us Mills was a whoreson anyway and the hopes of the populace would be disappointed, for Mills was still alive, although the populace had cheered the departure of the ambulance containing the inert form of the said Mills. We refuse to believe it, but Fernando, with all respect for

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our humane sentiments, tells us we are living in the moon. He tells us about his experiences at Easter and regrets he was under a captain who bungled everything and sent them all home half-way through the week, and the women are pursuing his poor captain ever since and himself. He smiles bitterly at me: all very well to talk, you were in the Post Office and had some satisfaction out of the racket, what I hadn't killed any one, well what bloody right had I to have an opinion about anything, old cods all over Dublin talking about danger of premature insurrections, keep on going until the bloody Castle is on its beam ends. Alph defies Fernando to prove Mills was any worse than the rest. Furious argument about 1913, but Alph tells Fernando that he knows all about propaganda. Back to Cullenswood, leaving the Alph swearing by Tolstoy and upholding peaceful methods with the utmost ferocity, while Fernando tauntingly reads a speech of Devlin to Alph. Wee Joe is talking about "bloody gambles for impossible ideals." Hear Mills is dead. Hope he really was an obnoxious character. "Whereas" on all the walls. The Irish blood is up for all the Competent Military Authorities and Officers Commanding. Don't regret it when I remember the recruiting rants. Dangerous to advise the Irish to fight, still murdering policemen. Snap at a remark that Mills was a bad egg anyway: tell us something original. Mrs. Pearse appears at the door of the room. She calls me. Her face is grave and pained. Deep distress in her grey-blue eyes. Horror. Sadness. A light falls on the medallion of her sons on her black dress. Upstairs she goes and points to a bedroom: "He is in there. The man who killed Mills. I can't give him up or send him away. Mrs. — sent him along to me." She shakes her head again and shrugs her shoulders: war is one thing but this is murder. Unforgettable tone and look. She goes down the stairs and I enter the room.

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On the bed young O'Dwyer moans and tosses. I know him slightly. A light breaks on me as he tells me his story after I have persuaded him to give up his revolver. Impulse, not murder. Dark legacy of Nineteen Thirteen and drab rooms and baton charges in O'Connell Street. Unheedingly he has lashed out when Mills had shoved him and told him to run home to mother. A swing of his hurley in rage and Mills falls. There is madness in his eyes. He sees Mills again and again with his blood-soaked head and his eyes haunt him. He groans and moans and relives the scene. He falls asleep. Finnbarr comes in later and I talk to him: he curses O'Dwyer for a hothead and says Mick will see to it. Mills was a harmless and kindly man doing his job. For a week O'Dwyer is restless and haunted. In his dreams he moans and mutters. Walk him up and down and talk off his unrest. At last Mick sends a sailor-man and we all walk to the North Wall; and with eyes still horror-shaded O'Dwyer vanishes to America, the quiet humorous sailor-man well able to manage him and the passage. On all the walls bills howl for the murderer of Mills, offering a hundred pounds as the point of the stilted jargon. One morning Mrs. Pearse cries out in dismay: A man has been arrested and charged with the murder. A trick some say. Others, that the Castle is not particular so long as it gets some one. Any Volunteer will do. The Crown case is flimsy. What of that? Mrs. Pearse says she will talk to Father Albert. Whether she does or not I never know for certain. Or whether he has dropped a whisper or a hint or sent a post card somewhere, but suddenly the Crown drops the case and the innocent man is discharged. A year later a visitor from America tells me O'Dwyer is still there, haunted and restless, and a psycho-analyst there had guessed his secret, which left so deep a mark on his mind and character. Sometimes in the Café Cairo

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in the evenings as I talk to Andrew, who vows we are all mad and Dominion Home Rule is the party of to-morrow and lends me *Penguin Island* and *The Story-Teller's Holiday* as an antidote for the froth of the times, I hear respectable citizens denouncing the mad young man who tried to cut our Gordian knot with a hurley. "Murder!" they splutter. A white face and horror-laden eyes rise before me. Inside the talk of the Café Cairo is as of old with the fumes of smoke and chess-boards out and the glow of Grafton Street and the black and sable posters of the Abbey calling across the quays. In nooks and at tables the wit and hope and despair and gossip of Dublin.

*Sunday, June 17, 1917:*

Whisper after whisper through Cullenswood House that the prisoners are returning. Rumour after rumour of amnesty for the men in Lewes and Dartmoor. A picnic in Rathfarnham near the Hell-Fire Club. Hills blue and purple, blunted, lofty with valleys below, odd white cottages a-gleam, a sun burning. A tame picnic for all the new nests of hills framing themselves suddenly against the clouds. Want to investigate the rumours. Back to city. Hope to finish some notes but have only written three lines when visitors and interruptions and more visitors begin. Mrs. Pearse hears for certain the prisoners are coming to Westland Row or North Wall at 4.30 by special boat. Half a dozen messages to this effect. Depart for North Wall at 3.45. Motors tearing along the quiet roads. Crowds after crowds gathering. Forests of tri-colours. Over the roads to Westland Row. Lines of men waiting for five hours with a depressing growler beside me. A wave sweeps past the police into Westland Row. The tricolour waves in the faces of the police and troops. Over platforms and a cheer for every train. At nine the prisoners came. Quietly Eoin MacNeill walked

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down the platform shorn of his auburn beard. With an Irish phrase he vanishes into the crowds. More and more crowds overflowed the streets cheering the brakes with the prisoners as they drove away. Above a sea of faces gleamed the dark profile of de Valera. Back to Cullenswood to meet Sla and Hurricane Hal. Read an English newspaper to them both: "The released leaders are moderating influences capable of giving excellent advice to their wilder followers." They tell me to go to Hell. Tales of the prisons: the warder who had known Tom Clarke and described him under his prison name of Wilson as a bad man for he never would keep the rules; farewell of one of the prisoners to this same warder in emphatic terms telling him all he had stored up, exit of warder and entrance of another with words: "Shake! give ten years of my life to tell that officious swine what you have just told him"; stormy jail strikes with tunnelled walls, shattered windows and sagging doors; whispers of convicts: "Are you here for doing your old one in?"; warders trying to soothe prisoners when leaders are removed to another jail that they have gone to the company of professional gentlemen like themselves, but it is learned the professional gentlemen in question have all committed violent and unmentionable deeds. A hooley in honour of Sla and Hurricane Hal. They laugh as they remember the prisoners sang as they entered the harbour:

*We love them yet, we can't forget  
The Felons of our land.*

*August 10, 1917.*

The sea beyond Skerries with an island and Martello Tower beyond. A mile in length this island with corn and stones and grass on its soil. Beyond the sea, cloud banks and the coast line. Rats and ghosts are the only inhabitants. Twenty minutes during the day Skerries

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stretching behind and the island are one. Then the great sea rushes in. On holiday here. The news reaches us that Mrs. Thomas MacDonagh has been drowned between the island and the mainland. Another funeral with the marching men in the city. At the table some one looks up and says: "She's with him now." Across the road from Cullenswood House I had talked to her only a month before and she had thanked me for an article about Thomas which she said brought out that he was not all Celtic gloom, a judgment that angered her. From a memory of her sad face with the auburn hair fringing it, I thought of Thomas often striding through the iron gate of Cullenswood with his pile of books and his quick words. Met him there once just before Easter week and told him a minor poet in his class at the University was telling every one there would be a revolution soon because MacDonagh had started wearing putties. MacDonagh smiled and said he had heard Sir Mathew Nathan, Under-Secretary up in the Castle thought the same. Again Thomas smiled and said they would light a fire that nothing would withstand and mock-heroically declaimed:

*The heady tides of battle run,  
O white swords! to the mark;  
Joy of the Fighter in the Sun  
Whose arrows slay the Dark.*

Next day he wore putties no longer and proceeded to address his students in lyrical terms about Jane Austen. "There's no one like Jane, lads!" he said with deep affection. Some of his students pressed him about this time for details of the proposed revolution the minor poet had announced but Thomas denied all knowledge of its date and, when his students pressed him as to what would happen if his revolution failed, he answered with a melodramatic hand-wave: "Other Romans will arise, heedless of a soldier's name!"

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*November 1, 1917.*

The Sinn Fein Convention. Arthur Griffith handing over his mantle and crown to de Valera with a bouquet amidst the cheers of seventeen hundred delegates. Proceedings marked by deliberation, freedom of discussion and comparative absence of eloquence, but there was a tremendous flood of resolutions and the beard of Darrell Figgis waved over his innumerable remarks and points of order. He sat with folded arms trying to look like Parnell. The power in the Convention was evidently de Valera although what his speech meant, and what his policy is, Heaven alone knows. Madame de Marcievicz attacked Eoin MacNeill and accused him of signing the Easter week Proclamation; her attack was unpopular, several released Lewes men growling beside me: "Why doesn't she leave him alone. He never pretended to be a revolutionary." De Valera rises and speaks with great emphasis: as one of the few living men who know anything about the matter, MacNeill did not sign the Proclamation. Great cheering and Madame looks puzzled and subsides. A gong boomed every eight minutes to quell orators. Had to endure outburst of oratory during the last ten minutes when a brazen-throated, purple-visaged bald veteran with a voice like a thunderstorm defied the gong and took off the roof with a panegyric of de Valera.

*March 6, 1918.*

Death of Redmond. Difficult for me to write about him. Some political enthusiasts at public bodies indulge in a despicable manoeuvre of ignoring his death. But second thoughts were best and these people were squelched. In a hundred years perhaps Redmond will stand higher than some of these wretched little political gnats buzzing round his corpse. He had no appeal for youth. For many of us

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he was dead in 1914 and dead enough in 1907. The Old Party barked at us and we went elsewhere. But behind Redmond rose the shade of Parnell, and remembering Pearse's praise of Redmond in that hour I was able to write about him. Strange how little we know of the past history of the last thirty or forty years.

*April 13-27, 1918.*

Conscription! Here's a pretty kettle of fish! The *Union sacré* (somewhat shaky as far as union goes I'll admit but *sacré* enough in all conscience with their Lordships in charge) is in full force; Dillon cheered through the streets of Dublin and my friend Bob, Pro-Ally and Constitutionalist of Constitutionlists dancing a jig with rage on the pavement as he prays: "Please God the Germans will be bombarding Dover before the scoundrels can lay a finger on one of us. Make your peace with God, young fellows, and get one at least of those who come to fetch you." Feeling at white heat. Dublin has been lit with an electric resentment. Insurrection permeates the atmosphere. Not since 1916 has there been such feeling abroad. Labour Day comes and there are no trains, trams, bread, papers, no shops open. The very clouds scarcely moved. Moral or physical means of resistance? All over the city groups discuss it. The Bishops have said all means consonant with the law of God. One Bishop is credited with the witty remark that when de Valera went down to meet the assembled Hierarchy it was as the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them. My old complex gnaws at my brain: peace or war. Finnbarr smiles at me. He tells me that if conscription is enforced Ireland will be one heap of bloody ditches and corpse-strewn fields. Blow for blow. . . . Petrol on the harvest. He says that passive resistance is an illusion. In all the jail strikes it was the will of a few men who kept the hunger



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strikes going, and even then there was a danger of collapse. Ruthless Warfare: the title flares from a copy of the secret I.R.A. organ on the table. The Volunteers laugh at this idea of passive resistance and solemn signing of protests and think now that a cartridge in a rifle magazine is the chief force in this sad world. The hard-eyed young men in the black hats hug their revolvers and talk like the *Morning Post*. "Don't argue, but shoot!" says this vigorous and amiable organ about us, and the young men hug their revolvers and applaud. Colthurst will swing from a lamp iron somewhere in the Strand long before the Irish nation in its present mood reads Sheeny-Skeffington's *Open Letter to Thomas MacDonagh* with its dream of a band of men and women united by a spirit of idealism and love of the commonwealth, prepared to spend their lives in its service but laying down as an axiom they will not shed the blood of their neighbours. Finn barr reads an old copy of this document as he oils his revolver. He smiles and says Lloyd George ought to have a copy. Yet there is a resemblance between the young men with the black hats and Skeffington in their spirit:

*Let sword cross sword or thought meet thought,  
One fire of battle thrills them both.  
Deliverance only can be wrought  
By warfare without stay or sloth. . . .*

The physical force ideal represents the only one the majority of the Volunteers have reached. Quench that flame, and we will have the politicians again. A nice question, says Finn barr, putting his revolver away. He knew a Volunteer in Frongoch who had read all the works of Tolstoy and shut them up, they preyed on his mind so. Otherwise he would have stopped drilling and shooting. All right for Tolstoy when he had fought his wars. All right for Romain Rolland polishing his phrase above the battle. But we couldn't all be Tolstoys or Romain

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Rollands. Quote A. E. to him. Well, he says, if we all had pens like A. E. there might be some use in arguing the question. He tells me a funny story of two listening to a lecture of A. E. lately. Startled by A. E.'s scriptural phrases the first auditor says: "This man is a terrible Christian." "Pooh!" says the second, "don't you believe it! There is no God and Russel is his Prophet!"

*May 12, 1918.*

A. E. writes an amazing letter warning the British Government against the dangers of enforcing conscription. It has the old eloquence of Nineteen Thirteen.

A great man, sitting in his office in Merrion Square with the kettle on the hob and stacks of blue books round him. Ask him a question and he'll plunge into a stack and hand it to you with ten pearly words. Watched out for the bomb in my pockets any time I ever met him. Most unjust, God knows when I stopped up half the night reading his meditation upon the State of Ireland, its character and future, *The National Being*. They call him the Hairy Fairy when they have nothing better to do, but he can see visions all right. Like the one we hear in the *salons* of the Giant traversing Ireland beating his drum and followed by smoke, tumult and darkness and then light streaming from all the hills of Eire. He wrote that vision down in a letter to my father just after 1916 I remember. There will be drums all right soon, thanks to Merlin and the lads!

*May 25, 1918.*

The "German Plot" and a Proclamation from Lord French and a swoop on all the leaders of Sinn Fein. Mick has escaped. Plot generally regarded as not so good as it might have been made with the help of the *Irish Times Handbook of 1916* and an honest-to-goodness G-man's

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suspensions. Funny stories about Lord French and his barber: "And what do the people think of my Proclamation?" "To tell you the truth, my Lord, they don't think much will come of it." "By God, they shall find their mistake!" Two days later, same question and same answer and Lord French says: "Do you know I begin to think the people are not so far wrong!" All the Jewmen in Dublin, who have come over since the war, sporting the tricolour. The South Circular Road loves them not.

*November 11, 1918.*

And where are the snows of yester year? The war ends with a blaze of Union Jacks down Grafton Street and all the imported Jewmen waving red, white and blue in place of green, white and orange; and the Sinn Fein Headquarters in Harcourt Street are attacked by a mob of soldiers and supporters. Petrol is splashed on the doors. A young man kneels in the middle of the street and fires into the attackers. Small riot follows.

And almost before the shadow of the Great War passed the shadow of the Little War fell over Ireland. The Union Jacks vanished from Grafton Street, the country lay under military Proclamation with the popular organisations banned as illegal, the leaders of Sinn Fein were in jail—and in one night the party which Parnell had gathered was swept away. Dáil Éireann and Michael Collins's Invisible Army became the real rulers of Ireland. But as yet the Little War was a phrase. An ambush down in Tipperary at Soloheadbeg occupied a few lines in the newspapers. Two policemen were killed. "Cold-blooded murder," said some. Others asked why the British Army couldn't protect the semi-armed constabulary if they must flaunt loads of gelignite round the countryside. There was a whisper in Dublin that the organisers of the ambush had acted on their own and had been hauled over the coals

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by the leaders of the Irish Volunteers. The incident passed out of the public mind for shots were strange sounds in Ireland then. The dark-eyed G-men pounced and headed the raiding parties. As the new year dawned a small Dáil sat in public session in the Dublin Mansion House and issued a Declaration of Independence. De Valera escaped from prison and the newsboys shouted the news down Grafton Street.

I sat in the Café Cairo with my friend Andrew and we discussed the situation. "We have one great hope," said Andrew: "That Ally that never failed us yet: the British Government. When our car runs short of petrol the British Government will tank us up all right." Rory O'Connor, dark-visaged with sombre glowing eyes, plays chess with Frank Gallagher at a neighbouring table. "O'Connor has a spine of steel," says Andrew. "He's a good man, and fundamentally sincere." And I remember what the young man from the Censor's office, who called into 55 South Circular Road where I now live with Oblomov, has said: "We blue-pencil Gallagher often down in our show. But by God! Can't he write!" Soon I had more ample opportunities of approving Andrew's prescience for I, from now on, saw Sion from a new angle.

## FIFTEEN

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IN the *Freeman's Journal* I discovered a very fine Isentinel tower to watch the epic of Sion with many pathways into the more sombre scenes of that epic. From the end of 1919 to the spring of 1922 I was on the reporting and sub-editorial staffs of that paper—seeing thus all parts of Ireland from a new angle, shedding a proneness to rhetoric, learning to put “the point on top” and working betimes twelve and fifteen hours a day. I was guided by only one thought in those years: to see out the struggle begun long before despite the questionings which gnawed at my mind in quiet moments. In *The Invisible Army* long afterwards I tried to recall my outlook and attitude in the composite character of Harding, although some kind fate spared me the later ordeals of that unhappy fellow.

The *Freeman's Journal* had then passed into the hands of Mr. Martin Fitzgerald and was no longer the semi-official organ of the Irish Parliamentary Party. Founded by Dr. Lucas in the days of Grattan's Parliament it was the oldest paper in Great Britain or Ireland until it ceased publication in 1924. Its files covered many thrilling phases of Irish history. It had had for its owners and associates honourable men as well as some of the most execrable of the vermin that crawled over the face of Dublin in the days of Pitt. It had been the organ of the Irish Party in that party's glory and decadence alike. It had chronicled Grattan and O'Connell and the Land War and the rise and fall of Parnell. When its files were burned in the Easter insurrection many a gay and sorrow-

ful episode in the political and social history of the capital floated in fiery ashes to undeserved oblivion, and by an irony of history the insurgents melted the type which had for a generation hammered all lovers of sword and pike and gun. Even the old *Freeman* office, beside the burning Post Office, was caught by the new flame which so soon caught Ireland; but from its ashes a Phoenix rose and flew down O'Connell Street, over the fine bridge, and took up its abode in Townsend Street, with one eye on Trinity College and the other on the Central Police Station. This new Phoenix's nest is a tumbled, empty and desolate ruin to-day, but before the last Phoenix died for ever the *Freeman* chronicled the most exciting history that had ever filled its columns. Not least exciting was its own final phase: bombs, fires, raids, arrest of its editor and proprietor; a three-year battle with Dublin Castle; its destruction with sledge-hammers by Rory O'Connor's raiders, slowly sinking fortunes in the quieter days of the Free State, and final absorption in its most formidable rival, the *Irish Independent*.

All the good and bad in the post-insurrection *Freeman* centred round its proprietor. Mr. Martin Fitzgerald was in disposition and vocabulary very like Fielding's Squire Western with all the good and bad qualities of that hard-swearing, honest-hearted man. Like the Squire he was a sportsman and an impetuous and courageous one, but, like the Squire, he could be harsh to his beloved child, and certainly the *Freeman* was a beloved child of Martin's. The first time I met him was the evening of an attempt on Lord French's life outside Dublin. It had been an exciting day. William Norman Ewer of the *Daily Herald* had asked me to come to the Café Cairo to recover from a three days' controversy he had been conducting with Madame de Marcievicz over the lunch table in a restaurant attached to Liberty Hall. Madame had attacked the

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*Daily Herald* as a monarchist sheet because it had mentioned the Prince of Wales and King George in the news columns, and sailed into the paper for not telling its readers to tear up railway lines and plant the Red Flag over the House of Commons. Ewer knit his brows until Madame proceeded to denounce several famous British pacifists and Labour leaders as hypocrites and double dealers. Whereupon to the joy of the whole restaurant Ewer opened fire upon Madame and told her what he thought of herself and her arguments with great force and candour and finally silenced her with his vehemence. This delighted Madame, who arrived the two following days in the hopes of converting so forceful and fiery a pacifist. The argument had somewhat exhausted Ewer so he asked me if I knew of a nice peaceful Café where he could smoke his pipe in safety from Madame de Marcievicz for a day or so until he had thought of some argument which would silence her for ever. It had been a great battle between Madame and Ewer and he was being invested with a halo all unknown to himself as the only man who had ever laid out the Countess in argument. At first in the Café Cairo Ewer thought he had found his peaceful haven. I introduced him to the greatest liar in Ireland and a number of people who had no desire to argue with him and he smoked his pipe so much at peace that he began to miss the fierce rhetoric and persistence of Madame. But there was a sudden shrieking of newsboys in the street outside: "Stop Press! Stop Press!" A newsboy stopped beside the table and Ewer was soon deep in a prose poem describing how bombs and bullets had whizzed and burst and spluttered round the Viceregal car at Ashetown that very morning. Ewer asked me if I could find out what the populace were thinking about the attack and said he would be in the *Freeman* office later, and went out of sight very

stirred by the prose poem he had just read and which he said revealed a hidden desire on the part of the writer to be a war correspondent. There was little news in the paper except that two bombs had been thrown at Lord French, who had escaped while one of his attackers had been shot dead. But all I could hear the populace saying was expressed in the words of an old man in the middle of a group devouring a newspaper, and the old man exclaiming eagerly: "And did the lads miss him? The old ruffian, they'll get him yet! Not that I approve of this indiscriminate picking off of unfortunate bobbies. For the bobbies and ourselves are all pups of the same litter. But that old ruffian!" Before I went round to the *Freeman* I had heard the name of the dead attacker, Martin Savage, who worked in a Dublin public-house, a quiet young man, and a reporter who had come back from the scene of the attack told me he had seen Martin Savage's body huddled up under some sacking and the only touch of humanity in the drab and grim room was a big policeman calling on the Lord to have mercy on the soul of the poor young lad under the coarse sacking. Lord French had owed his life to the train being two minutes late and that he had travelled in the first car instead of the second. I went up the old wooden stairs in Townsend Street opposite the Central Police Station and in one of the rooms off one of the many corridors a mellow and impatient company of journalists were sitting, all special correspondents and the honoured guests of Martin Fitzgerald, who was a whisky refiner among other things. His most noted brand was called "Acushla," and many hospitable gallons of the same Martin poured out for the knights of the pen from afar when he became proprietor of the *Freeman*. Into the room this very night waltzed Martin and roared out a randy tale at his guests, nothing much of a tale either for bawdiness or matter but roared



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out with such engaging high spirits that the worried faces of the journalists cleared and they pressed Martin for the latest news, which Martin soon assured them, with expressions that would have made the mouth of Rabelais and Fielding water, amounted to nothing. He waltzed through the door again singing a hunting catch. He was a red-faced man with an eye like some wounded bird in his more reposeful moods. Though his language belonged to the Elizabethans in his angry and convivial moods, and was one of the wonders of Dublin, Martin was a perfect gentleman in the presence of ladies—prim and courtly and most careful in his speech, a blend of a governess and knight. He had the deserved reputation of being a most sporting individual and a model employer. What gave him colour was his sudden outbursts. When he took over the *Freeman* his rage was turned against the Castle, and he told his staff to go ahead and let the Castle know what he thought.

Gone were the days when long speeches of stately rhetoric filled the *Freeman*. Double column leaders howled defiance at the Castle and huge black posters mocked and gleamed daily. Gay verse pricked the highest on Cork Hill while the Viceroy himself was told to go away at any rate. One day Darrell Figgis met Martin in the street and suggested that even Martin Fitzgerald could not say what he liked about such powerful persons as Ian McPherson, then one of the rulers of Ireland, but Martin roundly told Darrell that he, Martin Fitzgerald, proposed to dine on the livers and lights and divers portions of Ian McPherson, nay, that his teeth at that very moment were sunk deep in various unmentionable portions of all the Castle crew, whereupon, with a parting sweep of his noble russet beard, Darrell went his way with the kindly hope that Mr. Fitzgerald would enjoy that delicate repast outside the jail gates as long as he could.

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In due course Martin and the Editor were arrested, jailed and heavily fined; but Martin in spite of heavy money losses kept up his open attack and in glowing words defied all the attacks of the raiders who thrice attempted to burn the business offices of the *Freeman* in the small hours. The military were beaten flat in their attempts to attack the paper. Jail, fines, suppression were all countered, and the fierce resentment felt by the military rulers of Ireland can be read to this day in General Macready's memoirs, where he gloats over the subsequent destruction of the *Freeman* by Rory O'Connor's Irregulars, and preserves for posterity the true sentiments of the Dublin Castle terrorists, whacked to a standstill by a few hundred gunmen, a nation that hated them, and a handful of journalists who told the world the truth of the regime that turned the stomach of General Macready himself.

Before he died in March 1927 Martin Fitzgerald became a Free State Senator and had to sell out his famous paper, but he certainly lived before he died. He was a very kindly but a somewhat suspicious man. He never suffered fools gladly, and when provoked was capable of the most amazing indiscretions. He could risk his whole fortune to run the *Freeman*, and his reputation as a business man was of the highest, but he could not handle a pen with restraint when irritated. This irritation had nothing mean about it but sprang from his depression due to his uncertain health. When he took over the *Freeman* he paid several old members of the staff their full wages although he knew they were well past their working days. During the newspaper strike that closed down all the Dublin dailies he had a heart-to-heart talk with his printers and in the end they cheered him loudly. Once when the *Freeman* was conducting a campaign for the release of many political prisoners from Ballykinlar

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Camp, in the last lap before the Treaty, some prisoner wrote from a Dublin prison reproaching Martin Fitzgerald for not making greater efforts to give publicity to his own case. The writer was a well-known Republican propagandist and there was nothing in his letter to cause the eruption of wrath his complaint led to in the proprietor of the *Freeman*. Martin for some reason resented this letter very fiercely and angrily demanded to be shown the reply before it was dispatched from the office. He was assured the writer had been told off for his impatience and it had been politely conveyed to him that the *Freeman* was doing its best to secure the release of all internees and such individual complaints were not helpful. Martin seized a pen and, with several members of the staff on their knees imploring him to let well enough alone, added a racy request to the letter inviting the complainant to purge his system of wind in one short monosyllable no longer common in print since the eighteenth century. Martin saw to it that the letter was duly posted, and recovered his good humour. The angry recipient forwarded the letter to the *Freeman's* rival, the *Independent*, saying that the letter had been handed into the cell by a grinning jailer. The horrified editor of the *Independent* published the whole correspondence, including enough of Martin's addendum to satisfy curiosity, along with a virtuous note pointing out that the word was one of the coarsest in the English language. The delighted Dubliners loved Martin none the less for his homely advice to "f——t, and f——t twice," but a groan of dismay went up inside the *Freeman* office and many were the possible replies from prison suggested by the wits. Shortly afterwards Mr. de Valera decided to ask all the editors of the Dublin papers to meet him, and Martin Fitzgerald attended the conference. He saw the editor of the *Independent* and sent up such a coruscation of epithets

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that Mr. de Valera had to postpone the conference. This squeamishness of the part of Mr. de Valera inspired Martin Fitzgerald with a dislike of him which was to have a stormy sequel. The worst side of his character was aroused by Mr. Erskine Childers, whom he regarded from the first as a Secret Service agent and would hear no word in his favour. His subsequent campaign against Childers was mean and dishonest in the extreme.

When Martin Fitzgerald's enmity was aroused he lost all sense of proportion and discretion. Only the most violent protest from the editor prevented him from publishing a portrait of a Dublin milkman who had been fined in the Dublin courts. Previously the milkman had obtained damages against the paper for an error in a report, and Martin was very anxious to show the milkman and his premises in the middle of a very full report when eventually he was fined. Quite ignorant of Cathal Brugha's character he wanted leading articles attacking him as "a candlestick maker" who must not be allowed to dictate to the Irish people. De Valera to him was "the Dago" and nothing more. When the Treaty controversy came Martin wanted to suppress de Valera's manifestoes and speeches and dictated leading articles violently attacking him. He ordered his cartoonist to draw a very bitter cartoon depicting de Valera as the puppet of Childers. Eventually the editor had to consent to its publication as the only means of securing the publication of an important manifesto of de Valera's. This campaign was so violent that many of de Valera's opponents protested. "It is a tragedy," said James Winder Good to me, "that our social system allows such a reckless man to be in charge of a daily paper at such a time."

Jimmy Good was one of the most brilliant members of the *Freeman* staff. His death was an irreparable loss

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to Irish journalism. He was an Ulsterman and a Protestant. He used to tell with great enjoyment his last night on an Orange paper in Belfast. His Catholic friend the liftman was astonished when Good rushed into the lift shouting: "To Hell with the Pope. Long live the pious and immortal memory of King William who saved us all from Popery and wooden shoes! Down with all the Papishes and Hell roast the Fenians." "I never thought you were that sort of man, Mr. Good!" cried the liftman. "Ah," said Jimmy, "I am going up to join that Fenian rag, the *Freeman*, in the morning, and this is my last chance!" Nothing disturbed Jimmy Good, not even when he walked down the stairs into Black and Tan or Republican raiders. He would smile grimly and make some cynical joke. He could write anything at a moment's notice from a picture show to a history of Belfast. When he was a trifle depressed he would stroll into the sub-editors' room to listen to two Ulster sub-editors, who belonged to opposite camps, telling each other off, and cheer up at once: "Ah, that reminds me of my boyhood in Belfast." Or with a half-sad, half-humorous expression he would read an account of a Belfast riot and say: "Good enough! Only twenty casualties. We start fighting up there when you Dublin blighters start running from the police. I must have a week-end and make more looting than I would on the *Freeman* in a year." Once Good heard a sub-editor criticising the extreme business ability of the Superior of some religious order and walked out exclaiming: "Good-night, boys, this is no place for a Protestant." He used to enjoy the periodical visit of another leader writer to the sub-editors' room. His colleague had written leaders for years, but once in a way his pen would fail him and there was only one remedy: a visit to the sub-editors' room to borrow the *Morning Post*, whereupon the fire

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and vocabulary of that leader writer were marvellously restored.

Before I joined the *Freeman* I had known another Ulster member of the staff very well, Mr. Sean Lester, then News Editor of the *Freeman* but afterwards the Free State representative at Geneva and subsequently High Commissioner for Danzig. I had first met him in a small lodge near Terenure, where Mr. Bulmer Hobson lived surrounded by shelves of books and smoked a genial pipe during many philosophical and political arguments with friends and critics. At that time Lester worked on a Unionist paper. He is a Protestant and Unionist by birth but he had joined the Sinn Fein party and was regarded with a malevolent eye by Dublin Castle, which knew his journalistic ability shaped several Nationalist papers in forms not to its liking. Indeed after 1916, in spite of Lester's strong MacNeill attitude during that crisis, some Castle busybody tried to get him sacked, until the staunch Tory editor, Henry Doig, told the Castle to go to Hell and leave his staff alone.

On the *Freeman* Lester was a very pleasant and conscientious Chief under which to work, and his younger lieutenants owed much to his sympathy and direction and unerring instinct for putting the right man on the right job. He is a dark-complexioned man, neither too tall nor too short, with fine eyes which somehow sum up in one glance all his intellect, humour, reserve and capacity for untiring industry. Among his young men on the *Freeman* were Joseph Penrose and myself whom the remaining Irish Party lights among the reporters and sub-editors regarded as representatives of Sinn Fein. Penrose and I, however, were equally at home among the policemen, firemen and common folk of Dublin. We knew all the pubs and theatres and the Coroner's Clerk and the Lord Mayor as well as the politicians and gun-

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men, although Penrose knew something more than myself. He had the trick of staggering the Black and Tans when they held him up with indignant questions as to whether this was what he had fought for in Flanders and Gallipoli in such a regiment and such a battle, all minutely recalled from the reminiscences of his old school friends and hurled with admirable mimicry at the heads of the apologetic Black and Tans. Once under Curfew, Penrose got on his dignity and entered the military lorry which stopped him without protest, quite forgetting the Curfew pass in his pocket, a document issued to all journalists. He told the Tommy beside him of his work on the Press and then denounced the Black and Tans with fury, assuring the Tommy the Irish people quite understood the difference between the honest soldiers pitchforked over into uncongenial tasks, unlike certain murderous and ineffable scoundrels with their guinea a day. The Tommy cursed these gentlemen even more heartily than Penrose and through him returned thanks on behalf of the British Army to the discerning Irish nation. He next informed his horrified officer that there was a journalist on board. The officer with a few sarcastic fatherly words ordered out a new lorry to drive Penrose home, and at Penrose's request the lorry stopped at the head of his street so as not to alarm his family.

Penrose and I delighted to draw out another colleague of ours on the history of the Irish Parliamentary Party and the humours of Irish life, for on these Michael Conway was an authority as well as more sedulous and convincing in apery and mimicry of the comic in others than even Penrose himself. Conway had been an organiser for the Redmondite United Irish League and kindred associations. He was well known in the North of Ireland as an eloquent and humorous speaker at political meetings, for even on the wall of the reporters' room an old news-

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paper cutting depicted him addressing a cheering throng of Belfast mill workers. Sometimes Conway laughed and shook his head ruefully in front of this picture and launched out into side-splitting anecdotes of the old days before the triumph of Sinn Fein had finished Conway's very certain hopes of being an M.P. So perforce he had turned to journalism, where he was a speedy success, but sometimes as his journey took him through the old Ulster scenes, where he had orated of yore, the old longing for the platform flamed up. So, swearing the colleague with him to secrecy, Conway would disappear behind the scenes and then reappear on the platform and win thunders of applause for a finished oration from the supporters of Mr. Devlin, still strong in the North.

Once in Cork I introduced Conway to a friend of mine who had played a part at many elections for Sinn Fein. The two Michaels at first eyed each other with hostility and asked the same question: "Where have we met before?" It came out that they had met all over one constituency during the 1918 General Election. All was explained, for Conway's hand was vigorously shaken with the candid compliment: "The reason we always smashed up your meetings, Conway, was that you were much too plausible with your tongue!" Conway's florid moon of a face could be owl-like in its grave dignity or bacchanal in its mirth, jollity and malice. After his *Freeman* days Conway went to Ulster and made a name in Nationalist journalism. Death snatched his life's ambition from him at the last: he was rushed to hospital and died after an operation on the eve of his election to a safe seat in the Northern Parliament.

But the *Freeman* staff of those days was so full of character that it would need a book longer than the present to do it justice: Matt O'Hara, an authority on Parnell, with benevolent walrus head, and fund of anec-



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dotes, who could rout all the journalists of the world with his stubby pencil keeping time to the wreaths from his beloved pipe; Pat Murphy, afterwards famous in London journalism, best described in his own phrase, "nerve of a horse's neck"; Harry Newton Moore, a Canadian journalist, who acted as managing editor and shook out picturesque phrases for the posters as well as his Army Commission in the faces of the military raiders when they called; the veterans, Jack Hill and Jack Hall, who remembered the *Freeman* in the days of Parnell's power; and many more who still flourish their pens in Dublin and elsewhere. Not to forget Miss Mary Frances MacHugh, the only woman journalist on the staff, afterwards the author of *Thalassa* and *The Bud of Spring*, memorable pictures of a vanishing Clare and a by no means vanished Dublin.

Such were the colleagues in the sentinel tower and along the winding paths into the very heart of the epic and agony of Ireland from 1919 to 1922, and what an epic and agony it was to prove!

It was a wonder that the *Freeman* staff survived at all with the sensations which soon became its daily portion. If I did not here restrain my pen I could unfold many a mournful tale of the *Freeman's* aftermath. Of the older reporters I knew on the paper all but one have since died. Among the sub-editors the toll was almost equally great. Vivid memories come to me of a raid on the paper, and the subsequent shock to a sub-editor with a weak heart who used to lie groaning in agony on the floor when heavy firing made the nights hideous. Or the face of another sub-editor who grew paler and paler nightly as he subbed the horrors of the "blood column": the murders, reprisals, burnings, shootings and the whole tale of what the political enthusiasts love to-day to call: "The five glorious years." They were not so glorious from the

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sentinel tower of the *Freeman* or on the winding path into the centre of the glory. Sometimes a reporter down the country on a job got a blow in the face from some military officer and the information: "All you bloody Dublin rags are hand in hand with the murder gang!"

To sketch the Editor of the *Freeman*, Mr. Patrick Hooper (afterwards a Free State Senator) is a task beyond me. He was a kindly and courageous man, a perfect Editor devoted to his staff. He survived Mountjoy Jail, the bombs and bullets of the Black and Tans and Irregulars alike. When his life was threatened during the Civil War he insisted on walking unguarded through Dublin. This was nothing to him. Every night of his editorship his mail contained threatening letters from both sides. Before he died he saw the *Freeman* sink in calm waters after surviving all the storms through which his courage had long piloted it.

I joined the *Freeman* reporting staff just after the great hunger strike in Mountjoy, which lasted eleven days, in March 1920. Frank Gallagher has left on record an extraordinary picture in his *Days of Fear* of the sensations of the hunger strikers and the turmoil without: the overwhelming display of force outside the prison, the ebb and flow of hope and fear within, the end of the hunger strike following a general strike in Dublin. Never since the Conscription crisis had Dublin been so deeply moved as by this hunger strike. The one day stoppage had been prolonged indefinitely, and until the release of the prisoners on the second or third day of the stoppage there was a feeling abroad in the city that anything might happen. Soon afterwards Labour once more took a hand in the struggle by refusing to transport munitions of war. This meant that armed soldiers would not be carried on the railways. On the appearance of troops at any station the guard refused to give the signal for the

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train to start and the driver refused to drive the train. This led to a long series of suspensions. In Kingsbridge railway terminus the military authorities thought to break the strike by marching about half-a-dozen soldiers in every day to fill three wagons. Day after day the railway workers refused to convey the troops and as I inquired daily I got the same answer from a weary official: "Two more men suspended. These damned wagons are eating up our best men and the troops are going by road until they break the strike." One morning as I went towards Kingsbridge I saw a sheet of flame darting up above the station, and when I went in to make the usual inquiry a no longer sad-faced official told me that an armed party had entered the station and overpowered the usual half-dozen soldiers who were waiting to board the wagons, tied up the soldiers and set the wagons alight. Inside the station the usual array of red-hatted officers were rushing round and waiting impatiently for the arrival of the fire brigade. Meanwhile the wagons blazed fiercely and a crowd of Dublin wits were quizzing an innocent Tommy who kept on repeating: "'e came up to me, and said: 'put 'em up, chum!' and I thought 'e was kidding, but 'e wasn't!" This tale the Tommy repeated again and again to his delighted questioners until the fire brigade arrived amid a great buzzing and shouting from the red-hats. But the fire brigade men refused to go near the wagons saying, as trade unionists, they would do nothing to save the wagons which had thrown so many men out of employment. The red-hatted officers screamed in their faces, but the fire brigade men stood silent and impassive with a suggestion of contempt in their eyes. The Captain, a grim and bronze-faced man, told the military with a grin he could do nothing. The fire brigade announced they would stand by until the wagons were burned to ashes and take any

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measures necessary to prevent the fire spreading. This munition strike went ahead until the main lines of Ireland closed down and eventually, after a six months' struggle, Labour called the strike off. While it lasted whole areas were cut off. I remember travelling on the first train to the West of Ireland at the close of the strike and a great silence hung over the rusty lines as the train made its way to the seaport of Westport.

From the sentinel tower I saw the Terror, and the Terror had many faces. Sometimes it was the burned and wrecked town of Balbriggan with its tale of midnight murder and blazing houses and the Black and Tans shrieking like demons as they dragged the two Republican leaders from their houses and left them riddled with bullets and gaping wounds in their throats. As you left the train you saw a ruined factory with fire-worn walls; but it was only in the centre of the town, with its tumbled houses and bullet-scarred panes and terror-shaken groups whispering at corners, that the damage was apparent. In the poorer quarter of the town you saw gutted rows of houses and women shivering with frightened, despairing eyes beside their ruined homes as they told you: "They were devils, devils, devils. They screamed like devils and acted like devils and may the Devil their Father take them in the end!" Dublin lay under Curfew, the hour of which was lowered with every street ambush, until eight o'clock on a summer evening saw the heart of the capital silent; and in the slums the children cooped up in stench and fear breathed in fear and disease night after night. Automatically the fingers of the Dublin journalists formed the familiar story: "At eight or six or seven o'clock this morning or evening a bomb explosion, followed by a number of shots, was heard as a military lorry passed through Blank Street. The military returned the fire. There were no military casualties.

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Later a number of civilians were treated, detained or identified by their relatives at the city hospitals." Through the Dublin streets lumbered the lorries with rifles protruding or the bird-cage variety of light tenders in which the Black and Tans sailed round in to invite bombs and pot shots from the dark lanes and shady corners. Sometimes a Black and Tan in mufti struck a Dubliner across the face in Grafton Street. Sometimes pistols barked in broad daylight and a G-man or Secret Service agent dropped dead on the pavement. Sometimes in a field near a Dublin bridge a Sinn Fein sympathiser was found dying during Curfew hours riddled with bullets. Once I went up to a Dublin hotel and was present while the police opened a room where a murder had occurred the night before. Across a bed lay a man with a deep bullet wound in the lower part of his chin, his eyes glazed and the sheets drenched with blood. There was only one bullet mark in the room on the wall opposite the door. It was quite evident that he had been shot down as he went to the door for in the room all signs of struggle were absent. A bag on the chair beside the bed had been tumbled in a hurried search. Two men had called in the night and departed unnoticed. The man was a Kilmallock town counsellor of Sinn Fein sympathies who had passed a pleasant evening at the Abbey Theatre the night before. He had been unarmed and had no association with the I.R.A., but unfortunately for him his name and the name of a well-known Volunteer leader in the South were the same. The Castle propaganda department in the same day issued two reports: a notorious gunman named Lynch had opened fire on a raiding party which had come to question him; a respected town counsellor named Lynch, of moderate Sinn Fein views, had been murdered by a party of Sinn Fein extremists. After that I had few illusions about the Castle propaganda, and when

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later I read the revelations of General Crozier I found to my surprise I still retained more than I should have. Half-way through the Terror, the General resigned in disgust and "told the world." Not that there was much room for any journalist to retain illusions in that time. Once I had to inquire into the death of two young men found riddled near Drumcondra with tin cans on their heads. One was still alive in the morning and in hospital accused the Black and Tans of taking him and his companion up under Curfew, examining them and then driving them in a motor-car to the field and shooting them. The Castle issued a statement claiming that the young men had been interrogated and released in good time to reach their homes before Curfew. This was too cool. I had interviewed the father of one of the men before the Castle statement was issued, and quite casually he had told me how he had rushed towards the Black and Tan lorry as he heard of his son's arrest. It drove off and looking up at the clock of Amiens Street station he saw it was five minutes to ten, the Curfew hour. Nevertheless the young men had ample time to be driven all the way up the quays to the Castle, examined, and reach their homes before Curfew! This incident was too much for some of the Auxiliaries, to their eternal honour, who openly charged their colleagues with the murder, but a whitewashing inquiry soon settled that. Sometimes there was a humming of lorries after Curfew and a blaze of searchlights and in the morning it was learned that the raiders had just missed Collins or Brugha or Mulcahy again. Or an entire Dublin district awoke to find itself cordoned with troops and barbed wire and raiding parties combed out house after house yelling virtuously: "Mick Collins is here. Don't tell us any of your lies, we know everything!" In the meanwhile Michael Collins either watched the raid a few yards outside the cordon

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or sat quietly in a Dublin hotel known to hundreds. The Terror darkened with battles in the hills and blazing barracks and scaffolds in the grey mornings and firing parties in the south and long columns of horrors deepening, when over it all rose a Star. Terence MacSwiney stepped into the place of his murdered friend, Thomas MacCurtain, whom the Castle assured the world had been done to death by extremists, whereat Cork smiled sourly for it knew more about those extremists than any other part of Ireland, and the new Lord Mayor of Cork summed up himself and his times in immortal words: "I come here more as a soldier stepping into the breach than as an administrator to fill the first post in the municipality. . . . We see in the manner our late Lord Mayor was murdered an attempt to terrify us all. Our first duty is to answer that threat in the only fitting manner by showing ourselves unterrified, cool and inflexible for the fulfilment of our chief purpose—the peace and happiness of our country. To that end we are here. . . . This contest of ours is not on our side a rivalry of vengeance, but one of endurance—it is not they who can inflict the most suffering, but they who can endure the most will conquer. . . . We ask no mercy and we will make no compromise. But to the Divine Author of mercy we appeal for strength to sustain us, whatever the persecution, that we may bring our people victory in the end. The civilised world dare not look on indifferent. But if the rulers of the earth fail us we have yet sure succour in the Ruler of Heaven; and though to some impatient hearts His judgments seem slow, they never fail, and when they fall they are overwhelming and final." In these words MacSwiney gave a summary of the faith which upheld him in his hunger strike of seventy-five days in Cork and Brixton.

I saw Cork during this time with its Curfew, and there was an intenser terror by day and night than in Dublin

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with all the alarms and thrills and horrors and spasms. In the jail I saw the hunger strikers wasting to skeletons with the stench of slow decay blowing through the cells. Two deaths occurred during the hunger strike and it was noticed that the coffins were light as they were borne from the jail. This long agony kept time with the agony of Brixton and outlasted it. A sigh of relief went through the city when MacSwiney died. Once at the jail gate I heard the father of one of the dead hunger strikers turn to the crowd and say: "My boy is dead. He died for Ireland. If he were a criminal I would hang my head in shame, but now I can walk with head erect through the streets of Cork." Every night we watched the search-lights of the lorries playing on the houses of Patrick Street under Curfew and every day we watched the insolent Black and Tans flaunting themselves everywhere and sometimes striking the people across the face with whips looted from a convenient shop. Past them a lame man limped loaded with revolvers or ammunition for the fight fiercer here than in any other part of Ireland. Terence MacSwiney lay dead in the city hall with copper-hued face and his body was borne through streets white with flowers. His friend, Daniel Corkery, summed him up in one mighty line: "A star of morn, a-tiptoe and a-shout!"

The Terror deepened in Dublin and I saw on the green hurling field of Croke Park in Dublin a hurler lying dead with glassy eyes, with green sash around him, after the Black and Tans had fired on the crowd as a reprisal for the shooting of sixteen court-martial and intelligence officers in their beds that Bloody Sunday morning of 21st November 1920. Next day, in a *morgue* of a Dublin hospital, I saw the sixteen victims of that reprisal lying stark beneath their sheets with the wounds in their chests and heads. And so on from horror to horror until the Truce of July 1921, with a lively Black and Tan raid on



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the *Freeman* after an ambush outside the door, the April before.

Then came the crisis which swept me over the seas from Sion and a minor nervous breakdown to round off the journey, or my memories of Sion would have been even grimmer at this stage than they were. The Republican propagandist to-day will tell you that the spirit of the people in those days was magnificent and those were the most magnificent years of Irish history, and in this the Republican propagandist is quite right. But the Republican propagandist conveniently forgets quite a number of things equally true. Irish history did not begin in Nineteen Sixteen, nor were the Irish people the post-card heroes and plaster saints the new jingoes would have us believe. Ireland saw such men as she had seen in few other generations: Griffith, Pearse, Collins, Childers, Brugha, Connolly, MacSwiney. The heroism of the Invisible Army was none the less great for the absence of the glamorous background of insurrection with barricades and orchestras of artillery. The stand of a small people against the victors of the World War was such as to stir the heart and imagination. But this struggle ended in a crime against Ireland and left it with a bloody gulf of Civil War memories that hardly a generation will wipe out. And the cause of this stared the old doctrinaires and wrangling leaders and flocking job-hunters and yapping camp-followers full in the face. Liam Mellows saw it when he said they had all become involved so much in the routine of the struggle that they had forgotten all they had learned in the beginnings of the movement, and then he marched into the Four Courts with Rory O'Connor. To listen to any of them they all saw it and were quite ready to act on it if the other side would lie down and consent to be walked over. Ireland came from the struggle rotten with war neurosis and drunk with phrases and

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reeled to hell for the personal vanities and pettinesses of her leaders. It was small consolation to say the Terror had driven half Ireland mad.

Any one on the ditch could see things which made all the patriotic legends wither and shrink during the Truce and Treaty debate and the days preceding the Civil War, any journalist, any policeman, publican or any one else who took the trouble to use his eyes or ears. For one thing all the politicians utterly lost their sense of humour, and some of them have not recovered it since. I remember once in the *Freeman* office I felt the dark hours brightened by a very witty cartoon in the *Westminster Gazette* by F. C. Gould of de Valera as The Cat That Walked Alone, Waving His Wild Tale. Various politicians looked at this witty drawing and their faces lengthened at the sacrilege to their sacred Idol although within a few months they were dredging the sewers of Dublin for filth to pour over the same idol. One ponderous political celebrity fixed me with a pitying glance when I suggested to him that the struggle could not end in a Republic. Some months later he was exhausting all his vituperation on those who dared mention the word. Just then he saw no fun in this cartoon or doubted that the portentous Nothings issued as official statements were anything short of Holy Writ. But when the Treaty was signed all fun deserted Ireland.

I remember one night arguing with a group about the Treaty and weary of the personal venom and the slanders against Michael Collins excited by the phrase: "What's good enough for Mick, is good enough for me." I sought to enliven the discussion by saying: "What's good enough for Martin Fitzgerald is good enough for me!" I remembered that hard-swearing and hearty gentleman stamping and romping down in the *Freeman* with the weary-souled and patient Editor, Hooper, guiding him

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past all the rocks of his impetuosity and escaping the padded cell in the process only by the help of God. Frozen grew the faces of my auditors. They were convinced that Martin had handed me as big a bag of gold as they had just accused Lloyd George of handing to Collins and Griffith. I went out and had a drink with my friend Matt O'Hara, who shook with honest mirth and said we were all lunatics from de Valera to Martin Fitzgerald, and then lighted his pipe and told me tales of Parnell. De Valera resigned in the middle of the amazing and emotional debate and Matt told me the tale of Dillon buying the Stop Press in Grafton Street to shake his head with the words: "Poor old Dev.! Only five years! Only five years!" Then as the debate wore on the lights of the Irish Party still in the *Freeman* smiled at Penrose and myself as longer and longer speeches arrived in galley proofs: "Deeds not words?" they asked us sardonically. "Why, at the height of the Old Party's glory we never spouted half as much as these fellows." Martin Fitzgerald had broadsides fired at the Dáil debate and drew down on the *Freeman* the thunders of that assembly by leading articles declaring de Valera had "not the instincts of an Irishman in his blood," interlarded with fulsome and clumsy praise of Collins and Mulcahy, who at once indignantly protested. The angry Republicans at once quoted the many attacks Mr. Griffith had made upon the *Freeman* as a paper nourished on the blood money of Lord Edward Fitzgerald and conducted by the infamous Sham Squire Francis Higgins, whose ghost Mr. Griffith for long had discerned haunting the premises of the organ gorged with Castle gold and an infamous past. Martin was not at all damped by this but bided his time.

I watched the Dáil debate and found the sight a poignant one. It was one long wrestle between ghosts and realities

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with all the stored up personal spleens of five years flaming through the rhetoric. Mysympathies were all with Collins, who seemed to dominate the debates with his force, although sometimes in the lobbies one saw him with a weary and defiant face. A pathetic group of Easter week widows and women who had lost men during the five years occupied the centre, and of them all Miss Mary MacSwiney stood out for force of intellect and absence of any personal appeal to her sufferings or losses in the struggle. She was sneered at for her two-and-a-half hours speech, but she won my admiration for her amazing performance, although I cursed the ordeal at the time. Odd phrases from de Valera's involved and meticulous orations were moving, and as I listened to him I felt he believed what he said. Childers spoke like a quiet ghost as Cosgrave handed him a glass of water and then Cosgrave himself in a witty speech made the Dáil laugh, and the listening American journalists said: "This guy is a good guy. He can make them get together!" Down in the *Freeman* Hooper guided his vessel over the rocks. As I went up to the Gresham Hotel in the evenings I caught glimpses of Griffith sitting in a group of friends, a heroic little man, as straightforward and simple as I had found him when I met him as a journalist or had seen him taking his family out to tea in the grounds of the Dublin Zoo. In his days of power he had become a more mellow man than in the days I had read his many papers. He sat there, a granite figure very near the day when this last crisis would fell him to the ground, his life-work done and only a half-crown in his pocket. All the journalists of Dublin spoke well of him in private, which is the greatest tribute to any man. Sometimes Michael Collins appeared with Griffith and read out a statement to the waiting journalists. Through Dublin ran the undercurrents of feeling, and I never had such a disillusioning experience since then as I

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discovered the two political groups had begun to hate each other far more than they had ever hated the Black and Tans.

One morning before setting out for the *Freeman* I opened the paper and saw that Martin had won in the long battle with Hooper and Good, and a bitter cartoon of de Valera and Childers occupied the place of honour in the main. Like a flash I decided I would leave the *Freeman* and go elsewhere. This decision has often puzzled me since, for it was inspired by no blind hero-worship of Mr. de Valera. I had no illusions about the majority of the Post-Truce, Post-Treaty Republicans and my views were definitely Treatyite. Mr. de Valera's sincerity impressed me, but his speeches bewildered me and the silly hero-worship of every phrase and vagary of his by his followers, sincere and consistent ones and cowardly and self-seeking ones alike, were only less irritating than the open scurrility of Martin Fitzgerald backed by his power and wealth and incapacity to see that he was wrecking everything his courage had won for his paper. This cartoon was a symbol of the worst tactics of a certain section of the Free State propaganda with which Ireland was to be flooded *ad nauseam* for ten years to come. And these are almost my last memories of Sion which survived all the wars and rebuilt herself while I was away beside the waters of Babylon. Almost casually I left Dublin, expecting to be back within a few weeks. The Civil War broke and the bottom was blown out of my remaining illusions and many of my beliefs. In exile I had the melancholy experience of opening an evening paper and reading an obituary notice of Michael Collins I had written at Hooper's request just before I left Dublin. I had written many such and never seen one of them in print, for the *Freeman* died before they were needed. I would cheerfully have read them all than the one I read on 22nd August

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1922. Only one figure now remains in my gallery of Sion memories, a remark of Darrell Figgis calls it to life as he pauses in the reporters' room of the *Freeman* to say : "The cheek of this Englishman Childers——." And I think as Darrell passes on: "The very thing the Dublin wits say about yourself, you fool!"

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AND yet Darrell Figgis was no fool as he stood talking sanely enough in the reporters' room, soon to have his noble beard clipped by angry gunmen and head the poll in the General Election. Dreams haunt that adventurous man of the Free State Presidency and he has had palpable evidence that Michael Collins has no very great love for him, for Michael Collins has kept him out of the Dáil by hook and by crook, but Darrell knows his hour is here at last and serenely denounces Childers, happily oblivious that himself, Collins and Childers are all to have varied tragedies for their portion.

As I worked out my last days on the *Freeman* and grieved my Republican friends with lyrical articles defending the Treaty in several weekly papers, the figure of the man Darrell had attacked loomed large in my imagination. Matt O'Hara shook his head over me as the Irish Vesuvius and told me that Childers was a great man although he disagreed with him. Jimmy Good sighed and said Childers would get the shock of his life when all the dirt of Ireland was poured down on his unsuspecting head in the coming months: and Good smiled his sad and cynical smile.

A cynical Republican friend of mine, who survived the Civil War and the prisons of the Free State and a prolonged hunger strike in an internment camp, told me that I missed nothing during my absence from Dublin during those years, since history was duly repeated with a maddening reverence for precedence. He drew a witty picture of Rory O'Connor seizing the Four Courts because some

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1916 man said that had been done in that historic year, of the Irregulars then seizing O'Connell Street positions for the same reason, of ambushes of Free State lorries because some other veteran stepped forward and said that is what had been done in the war against the British, and so on like a tale long-known until the day he was arrested, and he knew a new era had really dawned when the Prison Governor greeted him with the words: "Oh, is that yourself? Perhaps you'll be glad to hear that your bloody old father is inside here before you!" Romance fades from a war in which the combatants know one another so well as all that. The pride of Ireland was deeply wounded by this war which shattered many illusions; but Ireland recovered therefrom as only a great nation could recover from so bloody and heart-rending an upheaval. To me the strangest figure of that time was Erskine Childers.

As I read the accounts of his capture and trial away in London and I was back again in 1919 as the military lorries hummed over the Dublin cobbles and the *Daily Herald* one morning published a remarkable letter: Erskine Childers had come over to Sinn Fein. A burning faith and noble indignation were implicit in every line of his denunciation of military rule in Ireland, and after I had read this testament I always admired and believed in the man who had written it. Dublin was unmoved for the most part. What had Erskine Childers told Dublin that Dublin did not know already, and moreover Childers had fought for the British and written *The Riddle of the Sands* to save the British Fleet from the Germans; and again there was something in the outward Childers to which Dublin could not warm until he had been some years in his grave. He was a Major and a D.S.O. And Dublin laughed at his indignant letter to the Press after a military raid on his house, and some young pup in a



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second lieutenant's uniform had dropped a cigarette on his best carpet. Janey, was that all he had to vex him? Jestng and doubting Dublin had no time to listen to the chord that was vibrating in the heart of this noble man limping past the trees of Terenure, his worn features and searching eyes alight with an other-worldly fire. Some strange faith was graven on his furrowed features and mirrored in the thoughtful and ardent look as he pushed his bicycle along the Bushey Park Road, a bundle of papers beneath his arm and all his journeys through the clouds and wrestlings with the oceans plain to any eye but a Dublin wit at loss for a new epigram. Fate was closing in on him: the man who trusts himself and finds himself at last by choosing his mother's Irish nationality, dying at the hands of the people he would have free in name, letter, spirit and deed. The magic of Ireland surrounds his boyhood and the venom of Ireland his grave. He dies in his fifty-second year with but two years of open and militant service to Irish independence. He has fought the Boers and learned what freedom is: he has fought the Germans and found another riddle than the riddle of the sands; he has defied all the treacheries and majesty of the winds and oceans, learning some deep lesson there. . . . At length, he dies for "the established Republic" nowhere to be found in his *Framework of Home Rule*. Serenely he walks under the Terenure trees, half-way through the drama begun one morning in the last July our world had spent at peace, the July day Dublin has first heard guns for a century. The Volunteers had marched to Howth to wait for Childers's white yacht and a thousand heavy German rifles aboard which had helped to give the final push to the creaky Empire of Napoleon the Third. Dry and silent he stands, this man of fate, Erskine Childers, and the Volunteers seize the guns with a cheer and march citywards towards the Scottish Bor-

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derers and Dublin Castle in a panic and dead women and children and a sudden quickening of hate. . . . Few but Arthur Griffith standing there, a future unrelenting rival, could have told who Childers was, or that he has ever done anything else but write his warning to England, the only novel perhaps which ever moved a State Department to change its policy. It is not beyond possibility that some gossip-monger already whispers that Childers is a man to watch as closely as that lime-lighter of a Darrell Figgis in his African explorer's hat and auburn beard who has left his photographs in every newspaper office he knows and fears that Childers may dim his ever carefully burnished halo. Even Childers himself hardly consciously understands that he has written a graver warning to England than that which has given him world fame and an interrogation mark in the ever-watchful eye of Mr. Griffith, for the warning is between the lines, and may be also a line from an old enemy of Home Rule even yet germinates in his brain: "The alternative to Home Rule is—Separation." Who but the brains which have planned this Howth quay drama of marching men and ponderous rifle smuggled in from Antwerp, the hidden chiefs and plotters of the I.R.B. or Patrick Pearse in his Hermitage eight miles away or James Connolly in Belfast, thinks the alternative other than a facile phrase to kindle hate or hope? . . . Dry and silent in the sunlight among the sea-birds' moaning, Erskine Childers stands and broods, trusting himself: he has seen the conquered Boers make peace, and laughed at the Irish soldiers who think him "a knock-kneed Imperialist," his heart sad at flaming farms and concentration camps and so fine a historian of all that thereafter that a blue pencil changes and cramps him. A wind from the Wicklow glens of boyhood sweeps over the South African veld, chasing all the dust of the House of Commons from his mind.

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He is a Liberal now, a Nationalist, deeper read in Irish history than this iron-jawed Griffith in constitutions and the rise and fall of states, and sadly enough for both as tenacious and as unyielding, wiser and more learned than all the cheering men. One ever growing and searching for the truth with a phrase from Emerson for his abiding star: the phrase that is repeated on nearly every page he writes whether he is tracking future German invaders or inciting Dublin to revolt: "Trust thyself, every heart vibrates to that iron string!" Or turning to the pages of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, he finds another text for every crisis of destiny, and quotes it too:

"Some chapters back one Bulkington was spoken of—a tall, new-landed mariner encountered in New Bedford at the inn. When on that shivering winter's night the 'Pequod' (the Nantucket whaler) thrust her vindictive bows into the cold malicious waves, who should I see standing at her bows but Bulkington. I looked with sympathetic awe upon the man who in mid-winter, just landed from a four years' dangerous voyage could so unrestingly push off again for still another tempestuous term. The land seemed scorching to his feet. Wonderfulest things are ever the unmentionable; deep memories yield no epitaphs; this six-inch chapter is the stoneless grave of Bulkington. It fared with him as with the storm-tossed ship itself who drives along the leeward land. The port would fain give succour; the port is pitiful; in the port is safety, comfort, hearthstone, supper, warm blankets, friends, all that's kind to our mortalities. But in that gale the port, the land, is that ship's direct jeopardy; she must fly all hospitality; one touch of land, though it but graze the keel would make her shudder through and through. With all her might she crowds all sail off shore, in so doing fights against the very winds that fain would blow her

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homeward; seeks all the lashed sea's landlessness again, for refuge's sake rushing into peril, her only friend her bitterest foe.

"Know ye now Bulkington? Glimpses do ye seem to see of that mortally intolerable truth that all deep, earnest thinking is but the intrepid effort of the soul to keep the open independence of the sea, whilst the wildest winds of heaven and earth conspire to cast her on the treacherous slavish shore. . . . Better is it to perish in that howling infinite than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if there were safety. For, worm-like then who would craven crawl to land? Terrors of the terrible is all this agony so vain! Take heart, take heart, O Bulkington; bear thee grimly, demi-god! Up from the spray of thy ocean perishing, straight up leaps thy apotheosis!"

Upon the deck of his white yacht Erskine Childers stands, foredoomed to perish in a howling infinite, deeming Wolfe 'Tone as yet an ardent but inadequate inspiration for all the splendour of his ideal Childers has seen on a well-scanned Irish page but with fewer illusions about the King, Lords and Commons of 1782 than Mr. Griffith still glowering in the ranks below. Away from all safe ports and alluring shores the white yacht sails to wider seas. . . . Soon high in the clouds Erskine Childers is fighting the Germans with bomb and camera, first above their Heligoland to round his prophecies with crashing steel and flaming death. . . . He skirts the Belgian coast, guiding war vessels over a map of waters planned long before when the right and majesty of Empire dazzled him more than now with the echoes of Bachelors' Walk in his ears and whispers of half-doubts from the South African scene; but onwards he goes into the wars he loves, maiming life and health, a man of his word, even as with the news of 1916 he half senses a coming revolution. . . . A year

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passes and it dawns slowly on him, even amid all the desperate planning of the Irish Convention and the smart Conscription device which rounds off its endless talk and plan and counter-plan, that his Home Rule is not so much a framework as a dead skeleton and he thinks of things to be done when he has fulfilled his word to the British and his pen and his arm shall be solely at the service of his mother's country. And when the Germans have laid down their arms he sees no hope in President Wilson at whose feet the war-racked world kneels in hope and awe. "A weak, vain face," he tells his friend, Basil Williams, "He will do nothing!"

Erskine Childers goes over to Sinn Féin, throwing all his fortune, his name, his life to the service of Ireland. He becomes a propagandist, a member of the Dáil, a judge in the secret Sinn Féin Courts. In the English Press he denounces the military regime in Ireland with a passion and thoroughness backed by the prestige of his life and work: "This Irish war small as it may seem now will, if it is persisted in, corrupt and eventually ruin not only your army but your nation and your Empire itself. What right has England to torment and demoralise Ireland? It is a shameful course and the more shameful in that she professes to have fought for five years for the liberty of oppressed nations. But her own oppression of the Irish nation will react disastrously upon herself. The reaction has begun." (*Daily News*, March 29, 1920.) "The block-house system in the war against the Boers of South Africa, reinforced by the destruction of farms, the devastation of crops, and the formation of vast concentration camps — measures impossible in Ireland — apparently succeeded, actually failed. For, South Africa, now publicly acknowledged by the British Government to have 'absolute freedom to secede from the Empire' is, in all but abstract theory, as free as air. To learn wisdom from

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these military failures is my last word to my English readers. You cannot govern Ireland. The Irish people can, and the island, I beg you to remember is theirs not yours. When they demand their independence it is in your interests as well as theirs that they should have it." (*Idem*, May 20, 1920.) Through all his life until then his heart has vibrated to the iron string but never so strongly and surely as now: one has only to read his articles at this time to realise this. Home Rule, the Irish Convention, all his careful theories are now things of the past. Around this flame still rises the dust of the library: he ends his pamphlet on British Military Rule in Ireland with the quotation from Professor Dicey: "The alternative policy will then be not Home Rule but Separation."

No more and no less does he say till the end, reiterating somewhat dogmatically that Ireland can never enjoy real Dominion status no matter what legal safeguards are provided since proximity to Britain forbids that. When he was confronted with the 1921 Treaty, his comments were curiously like an echo of the old Gaelic poet who cried that if God had willed there should be a new Ireland called England then to that isle might we all bid farewell. His answer to all questions was to point to the map. A profound idea took root in his brain: the much-abused and misrepresented Document Number Two, an independent Irish state in loose treaty association with the British Commonwealth. One has only to remember the experience and learning of this man, to read his *apologia* in the *Daily Herald*; his *Framework of Home Rule*, his personal journal; *With the C.I.V. in South Africa*; to glance at his volume in *The Times* history of the Boer War, his long years spent among the most diverse circles of men and with many minds, amid the wars and under the mid-night oil to realise the tragedy of a great man denied a

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justice and a hearing that was his due. De Valera alone sensed his greatness although Michael Collins came near to doing so in spite of the strongest temptation and inducement to the contrary. But another great man could not: Arthur Griffith, and Griffith had succumbed to the very strong inducement and temptation to think the worst of the man who, at the crisis of 1921, threatened the accomplishment of Griffith's life-work. Long before Childers had roused the animosity and suspicion of Griffith with his evident conviction that he surpassed Griffith in knowledge of constitutional law. Awakened by the bitterness of the Dáil debate, Childers in chivalrous astonishment stated the case against himself with great force, only asking for the withdrawal of the infamous charge against him. Collins could rise above resentment of the savage personalities of the Republicans and answer Childers courteously and justly with but the glancing stroke at Mr. Childers the propagandist, that Collins and Griffith had sat through more savage attacks night after night, and no chivalrous voice had been raised from Mr. Childers's side in their defence. But Griffith could only answer that there was no obligation to answer any damned Englishman or every damned thing an Englishman said. A Dublin wit thus inspired wrote:

*The Black and Tans in vain are gone,  
The khaki-clad are gone in vain,  
If one of that accursed spawn,  
Is hugged and suffered to remain,  
Who may by guile redeem from pawn  
What England's arms could not retain. . . .  
So you will serve your country best,  
By serving ours beyond its needs,  
Until the ferment coldly set  
Flames up to crown your secret deeds,  
And you survey it with--regret,  
While wasted Ireland smokes and bleeds.*

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To Childers this seemed doggerel, and he said so. He could not see for all his visions under the Terenure trees himself through the eyes of his opponents or that the savage and anonymous versifier was expressing what a good many people in Ireland at that moment were thinking about Mr. Erskine Childers. Was he not of mixed race, he asked, and in such a crisis, had he not the right to choose the nationality and the service of the country he had loved since he had visited it from his boyhood? He did not add that it was late in the day to question his motives after using his name and services nor that he had broken with nearly all his remaining English friends who furiously denounced his stand against the 1921 Treaty. But it was not in Erskine Childers to count the cost. Once during the Black and Terror, he heard that a certain gunman had come to Dublin, a man who had vowed never to be taken alive. Childers listened quietly to the story, and said: "Bring him to my house." "But the man will shoot at any raiders," he was told. Childers went upstairs and came down with two revolvers, saying quietly: "Now let him come, and if he has to shoot, I will help him." A legend grew round Childers later of the sour fanatic who destroyed factories and bridges and cable stations ruthlessly, but it was untrue, for the Republicans in revolt against the Free State never, according to Sean O'Faolain, who ought to know, really used his military experience. He had won the trust of such militants as Cathal Brugha, but the shadow of suspicion followed him. Even before the 1921 split there were Republicans who murmured that Childers should not be trusted with responsibility and secrets. Yet it needed but a look at him to know the man was killing himself with overwork; a glance at his writings to feel his accents true.

A man's enemies often tell the deepest truth about him. There was a truth in the gibe wrung from Griffith in a



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moment of intolerable strain when, after an emotional scene in Dáil Éireann, Mr. Childers rose in all innocence to ask whether the new Provisional Government would function under the statutory powers conferred by the Partition Act. Mr. Griffith had been elected President in place of Mr. de Valera and at this moment bouquets had passed between them. Banging the table, Arthur Griffith said de Valera had made a generous statement and he had replied, but was he to reply to any damned thing an Englishman said? He answered his own question and said he would not reply to any damned Englishman in that assembly. Amazement was all over the face of Childers: had not his constituents known him from his boyhood since he was six, without defending his nationality he could prove in private to the angry Mr. Griffith that he was not in the true sense an Englishman, and indignation rapidly mastering him, that had Mr. Griffith banged tables in London at the negotiations things might have been different. The scene ended in Griffith's angry: "I banged the table before your countryman, Lloyd George!" And in Madame Marcievicz's interjection in all innocence of the difference between an O'Keefe and a Gore-Booth: "And Griffith is a Welsh name!" The truth in Griffith's gibe was better expressed in the more genial version of George Bernard Shaw that Erskine Childers, like all Englishmen, was a born anarchist who needed a policeman to watch over him or else he would pull down the sun and the moon and the stars to get what he wanted. There was a truth too in the gibe of a colleague that Childers was neither Irish nor English but the pale shade of the Idea in Itself. And watching the pallid and gentle-voiced Childers hugging his beloved Document Number Two and pointing to the map of Great Britain and Ireland and droning on imperturbably about clauses and constitutions and sub-section B, and

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that Canada was three thousand miles away from the guns of the British Fleet, some saw in that voice and fragile profile the very Saint Just of the Irish Revolution. The house was on fire around him but he argued on. To the exasperated followers of Michael Collins he seemed only an ex-cavalry officer of the British Army where most of his fighting had been done. He had little of the magic of de Valera, this ex-officer of the British Army with a bee in his bonnet, it seemed, and they asked with impatience who was he to lecture them all on the merits and demerits of what the valour of Collins and the brain of Griffith had won. Had not Ireland always assimilated the invaders, would not her spirit which had moulded the Norman also conquer this new Free State machinery and mould it to her spirit and will in spite of all the three thousand miles to Canada and the sixty to the English coast and the archaic words of musty Acts and the symbols which so annoyed the polite and persistent Mr. Childers who had spent his leisure time in brooding over such trivialities so long that they had got on his brain. Moreover he had written one of the best defences of Dominion Home Rule himself, and it was late in the day to go back on it all and hector the men who had done all the fighting while Mr. Childers had been revising his book after he had finished fighting the Boers and bombing the Germans. So in their rage they forgot the patient and disinterested man who had shared their risks and worked twenty-two hours a day for them and they joined up with Mr. Winston Churchill who had fought under as many different banners as Mr. Childers, yelling at the top of their voices: "Renegade!" Mr. Churchill repeated it with unction and effect but it was too grim an hour to see the joke, although fortunately Mr. Churchill the historian proved more generous and more wise than Mr. Churchill the politician and pilot of the Irish Treaty.

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Yet all the while Erskine Childers had his own passionate partisans. Perhaps the greatest was Cathal Brugha, whose fierce eyes would have detected a humbug or traitor a mile away, and de Valera who never denied his debt to Childers. Those who worked with Childers were also his strongest defenders in a country where the mirage of Childers the Spy—a legend carefully spread by the official Free State Propaganda machine and even more infamous and vindictive than his execution carried out on the most flimsy excuse and with indecent haste—was to prove a very death warrant. It was a pleasure to work with this courteous man who never spared himself. The man had a spell. It was possible to feel that as you watched him walking from his house fronting the Dublin hills or sitting unobtrusively in the Dáil or speaking quietly to the journalists in the Mansion House. He speaks best in his court-martial speech where he describes his own life and ideals. Before concluding this section therewith, and sending back Erskine Childers to walk in these memories of Sion under the Terenure trees with his sad and noble destiny in his racked and austere face, it may be as well to recall that he was shot for his possession of a small and not very lethal revolver presented to him by Michael Collins, that he was captured after leaving his cousin's house in County Wicklow on his way to Dublin to obtain documents dealing with the London negotiations. He had been warned that the Free State Government intended to execute him if they captured him. In the South he appears to have taken little active part in military operations. "Childers," says Sean O'Faolain in his *Life of De Valera* from first-hand knowledge of the Civil War, "was the strangest figure in all that drama, and his end one of the most tragic. He *never* took an active part in the military campaign, although it was rumoured at the time he did, and he was

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even charged with attempting to destroy the Transatlantic Cable Station at Valentia. He was what the Russians call a "fatal" character and the shadow of his doom was over him from the first. It was sad to see this highly talented man, the author of books of world fame, a man who had held positions of trust and honour under the British Government, moving quietly among the Southern I.R.A. officers, who knew nothing of his career and services to Ireland, and completely underestimated his ability. I once heard one of them say patronisingly, 'Childers, you ought to be given some kind of Army job. You would make quite a good adjutant.' " Sometimes the tale has been told tears came into the eyes of Erskine Childers as he watched the worn and weary Irregular columns on the march. Again he retained the stamp the British Army had left upon him and rebuked the easy-going officers of the I.R.A., telling them they would never get their Republic if they were so slack in their work. "It was Erskine's sniff that got him shot!" said one to me who knew and loved him well. "He was a Major to the end though never a sergeant-major!" His last words were worthy of a great mind and a noble man. He shook hands with his firing-party and in the last documents he penned breathed a spirit of forgiveness and hope in the triumph of his cause. He resents only the accusation that he hates England, and the words of his friend, Basil Williams, may be quoted before we allow him to speak for himself: "He would accept no compromise and could not for a moment see that the substance, for example, of Dominion Status might mean all and perhaps more than all that the name of Republic could give. And when it came to means of achieving his end, he had become almost ferocious and pitiless. Not that he did not love England still: that love he never lost, but he felt that, even in her interests,

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uncompromising sternness was the only possible policy."

This is what he told his court-martial:

"I am by birth, domicile, and deliberate choice of citizenship an Irishman. My father was English, born in England, my mother was Irish, born in Ireland, Anna, the daughter of Thomas J. Barton of Glendalough House, Annamoe House, Co. Wicklow. The place became my own home and domicile from 1883 onwards, until I married in 1904, for both my parents having died when I was young, from the age of thirteen I was brought up at Glendalough House by my uncle and aunt, Charles and Agnes Barton, along with their own children. I was educated in England, travelling to and fro to school and college, and in 1895 entered the British Civil Service as a Committee Clerk in the House of Commons, remaining there until 1910, when I threw up my profession and prospects in order to be free for political work as a Liberal, and especially in the cause of Irish Freedom. As a young man I had been a Unionist and Imperialist, but experience of the South African War, in which I served for ten months as a Volunteer, afterwards writing a history of the guerilla phase, changed the whole current of my life and made me a Liberal and a Nationalist.

"I wrote and spoke much for Irish Home Rule in the years 1910-1914, and in 1911 published the *Framework of Home Rule*, advocating and elaborating a Dominion Settlement, and stressing the vital importance of fiscal autonomy; practically the same scheme as that of the present 'Treaty.' But I set no limit to the national march. The keynote of the book was that Ireland should have what the Irish people wanted. As there was no Republican movement at the time, and Sinn Féin was very weak, I naturally worked on Home Rule lines,

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though of the widest scope. The book, of course, was of no avail at the time. Even the petty Liberal Bill of 1912 was shipwrecked owing to the surrender of Asquith to Carson. In warm sympathy with the Irish Volunteers, I joined a small committee formed in May 1914, to supply them with arms, and myself, with my wife and one or two friends, ran a cargo of guns into Howth in July.

"Then came the European War. Like thousands of Irish Nationalists, I was misled by the idea of a 'war for small nations,' and joined the British Naval Air Service, afterwards amalgamated with the Royal Air Force, leaving it at the end of the war with the rank of Major. The bulk of my work consisted of active service flying in sea-planes as an observer and intelligence officer—that is, using camera, wireless, and machine-gun in the North Sea, Dardanelles, Egypt and Belgian Coast. I was also for an interval of a year navigating officer in a Squadron of small 40-foot torpedo-carrying hydroplanes (coastal motor boats) on the Belgian coast, active service of the most arduous kind.

"On this substratum of fact has been built the abominable legend that I was a secret service spy, and intelligence officer in that sense, and that it was in some such capacity that I have done my political work in Ireland.

"I should add that for some months in 1917-1918 I was employed on the Secretariat of the Irish Convention, working specially for the group advocating a Dominion scheme, that being then the last faint chance of effecting a constitutional settlement. The collapse of the whole convention and the attempt to enforce conscription convinced me that Home Rule was dead and that a revolution was inevitable and necessary, and I only waited until the end of the war when I should have faithfully fulfilled my contract with the British to join in the movement myself.

"With the formal establishment of the Republic in

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1919, it became necessary for people like myself, of mixed birth, to choose our citizenship once and for all. I chose that of the Irish Republic, like hundreds of other ex-soldiers, on my release from the British Army (all connection with it being severed). I threw myself into the work for the Republican movement, and at the end of a year took up permanent residence with my wife and family in Dublin.

"My first definite mission was to visit our Paris envoys, S. T. O'Ceallaigh and Gavan Duffy, in the summer of 1919, in order to help them with Press and other work, bearing with me the written authorisation of Arthur Griffith, the acting-President. My next important job was to act, on the nomination of Michael Collins, Finance Minister, as one of the five original directors of the National Land Bank, founded by Robert Barton, Minister of Agriculture, in January 1920, with capital secretly supplied from Republican funds, and involving many delicate responsibilities.

"Later in the same year I was appointed Chairman of the Republican Justices of Rathmines and Pembroke. In these and in a host of other confidential matters I was met from the first with a generous trust and confidence which I shall never forget. My achievement was small and my sacrifice nothing compared with the achievements and sacrifices of those who made the Republic and upheld it in arms against the British, but I can at least say that I was faithful to all of the many trusts reposed in me, nor has any suggestion ever been made to the contrary.

"... I took a strong line from the first against the British Dominion scheme, and in so doing came for the first time in conflict with Republican colleagues and comrades. Until then not a shadow of a cloud had disturbed the absolute harmony of our relationship. For myself, I had passed through the Dominion phase years

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before, discarded it and sworn allegiance to the established Republic. The slow growth of moral and intellectual conviction had brought me to where I stood, and it was and is impossible to go back. I was bound by honour, conscience and principle to oppose the Treaty by speech, writing and action, and when it came to the disastrous point, in war. For we hold that a nation has no right to surrender its declared and established Independence, and that even a minority has a right to resist that surrender in arms."

And with a hope that soon they would be united under the honoured flag of the Republic, Erskine Childers went into the shades with Michael Collins and all the rest, with a crackle of machine-guns and rifles over the roofs of Dublin on 24th November 1922. Like Roger Casement before him death in the end brought him justice in Ireland. The legend of Erskine Childers the Spy is buried in a deeper grave than himself, who learned to love Ireland in the Wicklow glens and sought truth on many waters, more free than all the Irish slaves and English dolts and Dublin wits and political carrion-kites in the Dáil and Westminster who whined and canted and jingled and screamed their filth. . . . Not unmourned he passed. Wedgewood Benn rose under Big Ben and spoke a brave and timely word. Stephen Gwynn told Ireland to remember the man Childers was and place him on parole and let him go. But in a civil war who could listen to that? Childers was but a pawn killed by desperate men who had vowed they would save Ireland from chaos at any cost, careless of bloodstains on their names so long as they left behind them an Irish nation. But their foes behind the roofs of Dublin and drifting to defeat in the hills, hemmed in by an angry people, until this hour have never reached the serenity Childers found



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as he shook hands with his heart-stricken executioners. In their rage they scrawled on the Dublin walls: "Turn over Mick (Collins), make room for Dick (Mulcahy), and Willie (Cosgrave) follows after!" And to-day they still remain rooted in the personal feuds of the time, counting the hours until some gossiping poltroon can pour his muck upon some other Irish grave, though it be filled by a figure as stark and noble as Feargus in the ancient saga turning, fate-impelled, with reluctant sword against his brothers of yesterday.

## SEVENTEEN



AND away from Sion for more than ten years these memories seethed and faded and came to life again in my thoughts until I wrote *The Invisible Army*, and banished the grimmest of them. I knew Sion had fairer faces than the one I had drawn in my book, and that this middle episode with Michael Collins careering through terrible years like some stark figure from an old-world tale was in truth but the middle of a story whose beginnings I had seen but whose end I knew not. Until this ghost was laid I never wished to see Ireland again although I could have listened to talk of Ireland for hours, and indeed once reduced two poets from Dublin to tears, by asking them so many questions that when I left them they wept bitterly and told Kelleher who reproved me: why overstrain the temperaments of the poets, why not go and look for myself? I answered that I could read the newspapers and listen to travellers' tales, quite forgetting that once beyond the Irish coast the magic of Ireland fades and is lost. The politicians were still ranting on their platforms, and some Dubliners I met appalled me with their smugness. But when I had finished *The Invisible Army*, and translated my friend Louis N. Le Roux's *Life of Patrick Pearse*, a nostalgia for Sion stirred within me. Only for Andrew it would probably have been stirring yet: why go to Sion when the life would be plagued out of me with the talk of what Cosgrave or de Valera said ten years before and all the venomous tittle-tattle and personal feuds of the Civil War and the smug melancholy which had produced the Censor-

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ship? All that I could see and hear without a long journey by train or boat. But one day Andrew came to London and said: "Come over. We may be a museum but you were in one of our glass cases once." Then I made a dash for it knowing I would see Sion for Andrew had reminded me that in the worst museum there are many exhibits and one is free to look at just those one chooses. A tenderness moved me towards Sion even then for I protested to Andrew that to call Sion a museum is not quite the word.

Hardly had I landed at Dunleary than I sat up and said: "There is not much wrong with these people!" Dublin gleamed like a Fairy City before me with the dawn above her squares and domes, and her speech in my ears and a great wind blowing through her streets. She was as a jewel one could hold in the hand and see in all her facets. Green flames of bronze rose over the river tree-fringed and spanned by a new bridge or two. In superficial ways she had changed: she had rebuilt herself from the ruins of the wars and printed flaming swords and shapely crosses on her stamps, and hens and woodchucks and horse on her coins. But the old tide of life moved down from Harcourt Street to Drumcondra with O'Connell's Street pageant in between. Old faces emerged from the tide, old names flashed from shop fronts and Dublin's chronicle began again. Beneath the careless talk moved the mental ferment of Dublin, and when I heard that Dublin was going to the devil I never minded that much for I had heard the same story ten and twenty years before, and I knew Dublin was herself again. I never slept for a week although I had only time to see one of the pubs of Dublin for five minutes, but I learned that the pubs of Dublin are all they were. Up in the Four Courts I met the Gulkin as wise and mellow as ever, and Jim Larkin loomed grey and gaunt in the distance

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listening to a learned judge giving judgment, and I saw four politicians in wig and gown whom the Gulkin assured me always sat at the same table and jested together, although by the remarks I had heard them making about one another I should have expected them to have been selecting some of the fine trees on the quays, rope in hand. Out in Rathfarnham I saw St. Enda's again, and in the Gate Theatre I saw *Peer Gynt* and an audience before the curtain which brought me back to the Abbey of yore, so many celebrities strewed the floor and a belted earl in the front row shut out the view. I heard more in seven days than could be written down in seven years and seven times seven years, and I thought how foolish it is to worry about Sion or write about Sion for a day there is worth a year trying to get the magic of Dublin on paper. Grave thoughts just then nibbled behind the minds of the Dubliners, but they shrugged their shoulders and, to quote the Gulkin, regarded their city as the fairest stage when all is said on their journey to Eternity. Flotsam and jetsam floated by in Dublin's tide: here I saw an apple-woman or an armless match-seller who had survived the terrible years unchanged with barely an additional wrinkle or grey hair. Down in a Republican newspaper I had a glorious argument with a namesake of mine who had cut the very tripe out of *The Invisible Army*, but gave me space with great fairness to reply. Then I went to see another critic who gave me the shock of my life. He also had put ashes on his head for the awful language some characters in my book had used; although I had heard some fine expressions, I had quite forgotten on the way down to the ancient music-hall, he had turned into one of the finest papers in Ireland. He looked more shocked at the few lyrical expressions of tenderness I let fall for Dublin than the oaths he had found for the first time between the covers of my book, and I really felt I

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should like to take him out and make him drunk, but that was a task beyond me. And, after all, he is a Cork man. Then I met an ancient warrior well seasoned in all the wars and told him that my second critic had been through all these wars with such and such a company of the Volunteers and had never heard certain appalling expressions, and that ancient warrior laughed so tremendously that all Rathgar was shaken to the foundations.

So I went on watching the Dublin pageant in all the colour and glory of her days and nights, knowing that the greatest illusion and vexation of the spirit are those of the political doctrinaires. Sometimes, as I listen to the rancorous gossip of all my political friends, I think: "Good Heavens! Is that as far as you have got? We were there ten years ago." But let all the half-gods of Sion dither, Sion is immortal, and as Ireland rises from the sea in the half-light, we know those who leave her for her good, that she is separated indeed from England by seas and laws and spirit and history. And as we turn again to leave the Bay and light on all the roofs of El Dorado we murmur as of old, albeit with a rapture sorrow-scarred:

*Not dark, as the hearts we bear,  
But enstarred everlastingly fair,  
On the darkness, O Banba!*



